

赤松中学（あかまつ・ちゅうがく）

生年月日、年齢、出身地、現住所に至るまで全てが不明の覆面作家。
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Illustration

◎こぶいち

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緋弾のアリア

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緋弾のアリア

東京武偵高校、そこは武力を行使する探偵——通称『武偵』を育成する特殊な学校。

「あるきっかけ」で頭脳が活性化するという体質を持つ遠山キンジは、そのことを周囲に秘密にしつつ、平穩を求めて日々を送る探偵科所属の高校二年生。しかし、通学途中に爆弾事件に巻き込まれ、強襲科の超エリートである神崎・H・アリアと出会ってしまったことにより、キンジの日常は平穩とは程遠いものへと変わっていくのだった——。Sランクの最強武偵・アリアと、（普段は）ただの一般人・キンジの凸凹コンビが凶悪犯に立ち向かう、大スケールアクション&ラブコメディー!!

MF文庫

J 赤松中学の本

アストロノト! [イラスト:bomi]

アストロノト!2 [イラスト:bomi]

アストロノト!3 [イラスト:bomi]

緋弾のアリア [イラスト:こぶいち]

緋弾のアリア

Aria the Scarlet Ammo

赤松中学



風穴あけられたいの？」

かんざき
Kanzaki H Aria 神崎・H・アリア

二丁拳銃と二刀流を使いこなすSランクの
凄腕武偵 他人の意見を聞かず、常に
独断専行で物事をすすめようとする

アサルト
強襲科

「普通じゃないんだよ。武偵高は」

とおやま
遠山キンジ Kinji Tohyama

自分の特殊体質にトラウマを持っている高校二年生 元・強襲科で、格付けは最低のEランク。早く転校したいと思っている

インケスタ
探偵科

レキ Reki

スナイプ
狙撃科

Sランクの狙撃の天才。
名字を知る者はなく、本人も知らないらしい



みね りこ
峰理子 Riko Mine

インケスタ
探偵科

探偵科で一番のおバカキャラ。
しかし情報収集の能力は並外れて高い



むとう ごうき
Goki Muto 武藤 剛気

キンジの悪友。
乗り物と名のつく物なら何でも運転できる
特技を持つ

ロジ
車輛科



ほとぎ しらゆき
Shirayuki Hotogi 星伽白雪

キンジの幼なじみ。
代々続く星伽神社の巫女で、超人的な
しっかり者

SSR
超能力捜査研究科



「あんだ、あたしの
ドレイになりなさい！」

……ありえんだろ。コイツ



P11 弾籠め

P22_{1弾} La bambina da l'ARIA

P53_{2弾} 神崎・H・アリア

P118_{3弾} 強襲科

P166_{4弾} 前髪の下

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La bambina da l'ARIA...

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Go For The NEXT!!!



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緋弾のアリア

赤松中学

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Prologue

----Who would ever think that a girl would just suddenly fall from the sky?

In the movie I saw last night, a girl fell from the sky.

The concept could be a good idea for a movie or manga.

It could be a prologue to the mysterious and special things that were coming.

The lead character could be an ally of Justice, and from there, an epic adventure could unfold.

But first there needs to be a girl who'd fall from the sky!

...If you ask me, these kinds of thoughts are nothing but nonsense.

There's no way a girl who fell from the sky could be normal.

If such a thing were to happen, you'd be taken to a strange world and be mistaken for an ally of justice.

If you think about it logically, such a thing would be filled with danger and nothing but trouble.

At least I, Tohyama Kinji----

would be glad if there weren't any girls who came falling from the sky.

I just want to have an ordinary life, like one normal people have.

That said though, I'd have to move away from this ridiculous school first...

....ding dong.....

I opened my eyes as I heard the faint sound of a door bell.

...Oh my.

It seems like I slept with only my trunks on.

I checked the cellphone near my pillow---- It was seven in the morning.

(Who could it be at this early hour...)

Maybe I should just pretend that I'm not home.

But, that modest way of ringing my door bell gave me a bad feeling.

I reluctantly put on my shirt and uniform pants as I crossed the large room in my flat... and peeked through the keyhole to see who was there.

And just as I thought----SHE was there.

"...Oh boy"



---Shirayuki was standing there.

Pure white blouse. Crimson-colored tie and skirt.

She was staring at her lacquered compact and arranging her hair as she stood there wearing the pristine Butei high school uniform.

"What is she doing? In a place like this...?"

I was asking myself why when she suddenly started taking a deep breath, in and out.

I can't understand her, as usual.

--- I opened the door.

"Hey, Shirayuki."

She quickly shut her compact and put it away as I opened the door.

Then,

"Kin-chan!"

A smile lighted her face up as she greeted me with my old nickname.

"I thought I already told you to stop calling me that."

"Oh, s-sorry... But I was thinking of Kin-chan and then you came out and.... Oh, sorry! I called you 'Kin-chan' again and, oh my, I'm really sorry, Kin-chan, uh..."

The shade of her face gradually turned pale and she quickly tried to cover her mouth.

...The urge to complain suddenly went away.

Shirayuki Hotogi.

As you can guess from the way she called me, we're childhood friends. As for her appearance, she had snow-white skin like her name implied, and her long black hair came down past her waist.

She had calm, gentle eyes and long eyebrows.

It was what you would expect from a maiden of Hotogi Shrine. She was just like a Yamato-Nadeshiko who came out from a book.

"Listen, this place is a male dormitory and you shouldn't come here without a reason."

"Um, b-but I was out on a training camp on Isejinguu until yesterday... And I wasn't able to do anything for you so..."

"There's no need to."

"....B-but..... ohh...."

"...Alright, alright!"

I decided to let her in when I saw tears starting to well in her eyes.

"I..... I hope I won't be a bother."

She made a perfect 90 degree bow, and then proceeded to take off her black strapped shoes, arranging them carefully by the door.

"So, why did you come here?" I felt too lazy to sit properly in a chair so I sat on the low table.

"I-I wanted you to have these."

She started to untie the Japanese cloth she was holding as she, too, sat in front of the table.

She placed a crimson-colored Jyuubako on the table and opened the painted lid.

Inside the Jyuubako was a soft-looking omelet, orderly lined-up sweet boiled shrimps, silver salmon, luxurious foods like Saijyou Persimmons, and shiny white rice.

"...Wasn't it bothersome for you to make all of this?"

I asked Shirayuki while she was handing me painted chopsticks and she said,

"D-don't worry, I just woke up a bit earlier than usual. Besides, I was worried that all you were having was food from the convenience store during spring break so..."

"But that shouldn't concern you."

Still, despite what I said, I picked up the Jyuubako and decided to have the breakfast she made for me. Her cooking was superb as usual; especially when it came to Japanese food.

Shirayuki just looked down as a pink shade was starting to crawl all over her face. She started peeling a mandarin, taking out the white veins on its surface, and then placed it on a saucer.

It seemed that she was peeling those for me.

Well..... Maybe I should thank her, at the very least.

I started to munch on the peeled mandarin after I finished the delicious meal and looked up at Shirayuki.

".....Uh, thanks for the meals you always make for me."

"Oh, no; I should be the one thanking you, so thank you very much!"

"And why should you thank me? Hey, stop bowing like that; it looks like you're kneeling in front of me or something."

"B-but, you ate all of the food I made, and you even thanked me for it, so it just seemed like I should thank you so..."

She looked up at me with a face full of joy, with faint tears shrouding her eyes.

Oh, give me a break.

Why are you always acting so timid? You should have more confidence in yourself.

Just look at that well endowed chest of yours.

With thoughts like that crossing my mind, I suddenly, accidentally...

Stared at her breasts.

She was bowing at me so her deep cleavage was showing, outlined by a black lacy bra.

(Black... that's out of the question!)

I tried to look away from those breasts wearing a bra that wasn't meant for a high school student to wear. But...

It started to throb.

That dangerous sensation, where the blood all over my body was concentrating at the core of my body took over.

---This is bad.

I was denying myself.

I was denying myself of this sensation.

"Thanks for the meal."

I stood up in a hurry, trying to escape from Shirayuki.

Phew. Seems like I made it. It was safe for today.

Shirayuki took the empty Jyuubako away, went over the sofa, and picked up my school uniform.

"Here, Kin-chan. We're sophomores starting today, aren't we? Now take this bullet-proof uniform."

After putting on the uniform, I went over to the television and picked up a gun.

"I don't think a gun is necessary since we're just having a starting ceremony today."

"You should take it with you Kin-chan, since it's a school rule."

She was saying this as she knelt before me, putting the belt on along with the holster.

School rule... 'A student of Butei High School is obliged to arm himself with a gun and a blade at all times within the school grounds', huh?

Yeah, it's not normal.

I hate to admit it, but nothing in Butei High is normal.

"Besides, you can't tell when the 'Butei-killer' will attack again...."

She looked up at me with a worried look on her eyes.

"A 'Butei-killer'?"

"Yes. A letter came in during the New Year about a serial killer case."

I faintly recalled receiving a message like that during the New Year.

If I remember correctly, it was a psychopath that was setting bombs on vehicles, incapacitating the victims, sending a remote-controlled helicopter armed with a machine gun, and finally leading the victim to the sea and sending them off the cliff.

"But I thought he was arrested?"

"T-there might be a copycat criminal lurking around. Besides, when I did my fortune-telling this morning, it said that you'll have trouble concerning a girl soon... I wouldn't be able to take it if something happened to you..."

Trouble concerning a girl, huh? Well, there might be some truth to that fortune, since I had to deal with THIS so early in the morning.

Shirayuki started to well up tears again as I remembered that if I break another one of the regulations again, my current goal of transferring to an ordinary school would be complicated.

Maybe arming myself isn't such a bad idea after all.

"Alright, I'm arming myself right now, okay? So stop crying over there."

I let out a sigh as I took out a butterfly knife which was a legacy from my deceased brother and put it inside my pocket.

For some reason, Shirayuki started to stare at me, placing her palms on her cheeks.

"Kin-chan... you look so cool. No wonder your ancestors were all allies of justice... You just have that kind of air around you."

"Hey, stop it. It sounds like I'm some kind of brat."

Shirayuki took out a black name tag out of nowhere and put it on my chest as I was complaining to her.

The name 'Kinji Tohyama' was written in it.

When April comes at Butei High, students are obliged to put on a name tag.

Of course, I was planning to ignore that, but it seems that Shirayuki saw over that.

Typical... just what you'd expect from the president of the school council, gardening club, sewing club and volleyball club. On top of that, her grades in all subjects are excellent. No wonder a slacker like me is having a hard time keeping up with her.

"I'll go after I check the mail. You can go ahead without me."

"Um, if that's the case, maybe I could wash your dishes while..."

"Don't bother."

".....Oh, okay. Well um, I'd be happy if you send me a message or something later."

She said in a slightly embarrassed manner, and then bowed low.

She went out of the room after the deep salute.

... Phew.

Finally, there weren't any bothers.

I sat in front of my PC and lazily checked emails and browsed the web.

When I looked up at the clock, it was already 7:55.

Oops, it looks like I was being too lazy.

---I'm definitely late for the bus stop at 7:58.

---For the rest of my life

I would definitely regret missing that bus stop at 7:58.

Because some time later, a girl came falling from the sky.

And that girl's name is Aria H. Kanzaki.

1st Ammo: La bambina da l'ARIA

Was it Arthur Rimbaud who said that 'Should rain fall, you should enjoy the down pour'? Or something else about being positive about you being a loser rather than being irritated by it. I followed those (Rimbaud's) words and decided to leisurely take a bicycle and cycle to school since I've missed the bus that passes by at 7:58.

I went through the narrow passage between the convenience store and the video shop near my flat and passed under the train station for the monorail heading for Odaiba. Over the station were the soaring towers of Tokyo buildings, floating on the oasis that was called a city. Butei High, or formally known as Tokyo Butei High School, was located on a man-made island just south of the Rainbow bridge, with a land area of 2 kilometers from the north to the south and 500 meters from the east to the west.

The Universal Educational Facility, called 'Academy Island' by some, where the 'Buteis' were being brought up, was located within this island.

A 'Butei' is a national qualification established to fight against the worsening crime condition within the country, permitting people holding this license to arm themselves and enter a crime scene to capture criminals, just like the police force.

But, unlike the police, a 'Butei' is motivated by money and they can take on any kind of job as long as it is permitted under the Butei Laws, no matter how dangerous or trivial it is. To put it simply, they are mercenaries.

---Now.

Here at Tokyo Butei High School, students can take specific subjects that have direct connections to Butei activities, as well as the normal subjects that ordinary students are obliged to learn. When you say specific subject, there are different divisions which a student could choose from, like the Inquesta division that I've just passed by over there.

It was the division that I've been a part of since my third semester of freshman year. It is a place where the standard methods of investigation and logic are taught.

You can say that this is the most sensible one among all the divisions.

Just past the Inquesta division is the Connect and next to it is Repier. These divisions aren't that bad since they lean towards the peaceful side of things.

But, move on a little further and you'll be able to see the notorious Assault division, where I was assigned for the first 2 semesters of my freshman year.

...I turned my bicycle towards the sports complex.

Looks like I made it on time for the starting ceremony.

Well, even for this kind of school, it'll be a bad impression to start my sophomore year with a late---

"There is a bomb set on your bicycle."

A weird voice spoke from somewhere, just like a blackmail letter.

"If you try to get off or reduce your current speed, it will explode."

I got it; the weird voice came from a vocaloid, a device that can alter the voice of the speaker that is very popular on the net.

I analyzed where the voice came from in a calm manner. Then, a word that was said by the voice suddenly sent a chill down my spine.

---Wait. A bomb...?

What the--, Who started this? What kind of joke is this?

I was in a slight state of panic as I looked around myself, just to find a weird object was following me from behind.

It was a vehicle that was running with just two wheels aligned horizontally, just like a scare-crow. I remembered seeing that kind of vehicle on TV....

It was something called 'Segway'.

"You can't ask anyone for help. Even using your cellphone will start the detonator of the bomb."

When I checked the Segway properly, there was no one operating inside. There was only a loud speaker and an automatic gun.

".....!"

The gun was aimed straight towards me.

It was an UZI.

A submachine-gun capable of firing 10 rounds of 9mm parabellum ammo per second; courtesy of the IMI company in Israel.

"What the hell is that!? Is this a joke?!"

I yelled at the Segway, but of course, it didn't answer me.

It just aimed its gun, following me from behind.

---Why?!

Why is this happening to me!?

My mind was in a complete state of panic as I checked around the body of the bicycle and found a solid object beneath the seat.

I was telling myself to be calm as I traced the object with my fingers.

---Shit. I'm not sure about the type but it seemed to be a plastic bomb (C4). To make matters worse, the size of the bomb would be capable of blowing a car into pieces, let alone a bicycle, should the bomb explode.

- G - I - V - E - M - E - A - B - R - E - A - K -

Cold sweat dripped down my face as fear coursed through my whole body.

Someone had done it. I could tell by instinct, this was no joke.

They got me, for Christ's sake! My bicycle was hijacked.

---This a rare case of bicycle-jack, damn it!

Oh shit.

Oh shit.

Why is this happening to me?

---Expecting the worst, I chose to run towards the 2nd school ground which was empty at this early hour. I entered the school grounds regretting that there was nothing I could do.

The Segway, by the way, kept following me, its gunpoint aimed straight at me.

This method of ambush. It's just like the 'Butei-killer' that Shirayuki was telling me about this morning.

Well, leaving that as is, what should I do!?

I've tried to think of a good way out of this on my way to this school ground but it was still a checkmate.

---Don't tell me. Am I-am I going to die now?

In a place like this?

"---?"

In this impossible situation, I saw something that was harder to comprehend than my current situation.

I saw a girl standing at the top of the 7 floor apartment near the school ground, which was the female dormitory if I remembered correctly.

She was wearing a Butei High School uniform.

Even from this far, her pink twin-tailed hair was visible.

She-That girl jumped off the building, with the early morning moon faintly visible behind her.

(---She jumped off?!)

I almost lost my balance as I missed a step steering the pedals. I recovered quickly.

The girl who jumped off the building deployed a paraglider, which was apparently prepared by her beforehand.

I was staring dumb-founded at her when I noticed that she was heading towards my direction!

"Hey there! Whoever you are, don't come near this bicycle, it's loaded with---"

My warning didn't seem to reach her as she kept coming at me. With great speed.

The paraglider suddenly changed its course, leaving an L-shaped trail behind as she performed a sudden curve. I saw her draw silver black guns from the holsters attached on her left and right leg.



Then---

"Hey! The stupid guy over there! Yes, I'm talking to you! Quickly lower your head!"

A thundering sound resounded as she fired her guns.

I heard the Segway behind me get shot by her before I could completely lower my head!

It is said that the average firing range of a gun was about 7 meters. But the distance between the girl and the Segway was much greater than that.

Not only that, she was shooting from an unstable paraglider, with two guns shooting horizontally.

Even if she was bound by those disadvantages, the bullets hit the target like magic.

She gave no time for the Segway to counterattack. Seconds later, it blew up into pieces.

---She knows how to use a gun.

Her shooting skills were great.

Was there a girl like that in our school?

The girl in question returned her guns to their holsters, falling towards my head, her buttocks swaying as she fell.

Oh yeah. It was still too early to be relieved. I shouldn't mind about her buttocks.

I remembered there was still a bomb that could be used for demolition beneath mine!

So, I tried to get away from her.

"I've been telling you not to come near me! This bicycle's loaded with a bomb! If I reduce speed, it'll go off and you'll be blown up with me!"

"---What an idiot!"

She planted a solid kick on my head as she fell above me.

"Remember Butei Law article section 1, 「Believe in your comrades and help each other」! ---here I come!"

The girl ascended as her paraglider caught the wind current.

I forgot my anger at her kick and stared in awe at the amazing sight.

Okay, I'll admit she's got great motor skills. But I think she should wear spats at least.

She flew away fast so I didn't see anything though.

---Wait. What did she just say?

'Here I come'? What was she planning to do?

Is she planning to help me?

---but how?

Towards the end of the ground, the girl started to drop distance from the ground and made a sharp U-turn towards me.

Then she---she was hanging with just her toe holding the handle.

She released her hand from the handle of break cord and inserted her toe in it.

The paraglider was going straight towards me.

As you can expect from the situation, I was heading towards her.

"---Oh great.....!"

I felt my face gradually turn blue as I understood what the girl was trying to do.

She noticed that I got what was on her mind and said,

"Hey you idiot! Don't just look, pedal harder!"

She opened up her arms, making a cross as she shouted directions.

---You're the one who's an idiot!

Who could ever come up with this kind of rescue?!

But, it's not like I have any other choice...

So, I pedaled harder.

Faster, faster, faster! With all my strength!

Our distance started to shrink as I came near her and she to me.

Oh yeah, in the animation movie that I watched last night there was a scene like this too.

---But hey... Wasn't it the man who was rescuing the girl?!

The moment I made that Tsukkomi to myself, I felt myself embracing the girl.

And I was taken away from that bomb-loaded bicycle.

I noticed a sweet scent coming from her tummy. It was the smell of a Gardenia and---

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!

A flash of light and a thundering sound was followed by a blast.

The bicycle that I had been riding exploded into pieces.

So that was a genuine bomb after all---!

As the blast sent the paraglider flying away, it was caught by a branch of a cherry tree and we were thrown inside the sports complex storage.

I heard crashing sounds as we collided with unknown things inside the storage and....

My mind fell unconscious for a moment.

.....

.....

"Ow.... that... hurt..."

....I was....

I was sitting inside a rectangular space when I recovered my consciousness.

---Where am I?

I remember being thrown inside the storage room and.... wait, I get it.

I'm inside the jumping box.

It looks like the top box was blown away when I crashed in and it seemed that I fell inside it afterwards.

But I wonder...I can't move my body.

Maybe it was because I was trapped inside this narrow space. But then again, maybe it was because of the sweet-smelling SOMETHING in front of me.

What is this anyway....this warm and soft... something.

I also noticed several things around my body. My side was held in between by a bouncy and comfortable object. Something leaned on my shoulders.

Finally, I felt something very soft on my temple.

"Hm.....?"

I tried to feel what was on my head with my temple and cheeks. Then...

---Someone came face to face with me.

(.....She's cu.....!)

It was a girl's face...

She was so pretty that I almost said she was cute by reflex.

It was the face of the brave girl who had jumped off the building, fought while in a paraglider, and took me away from the bomb-loaded bicycle.

".....!"

Suddenly, I knew.

The bouncy object that held my side was her leg.

The thing that leaned on my shoulders was her arms.

---Who would have thought that I'd be stuck in here together with this girl while EMBRACING each other?

This is not happening.

It just can't.

I was too close to a female body.

I started to feel the rush of heat being concentrated into my core.

I shouldn't be this close to a girl's body.

This is exactly what I'm forbidding myself from doing.

".....H-hey....."

I tried to talk to her but there was no answer.

Her consciousness was somewhere else at the moment.

Along her eyes were pointy lashes.

The pink lips that breathed sweet-smelling breath were small, just like cherry blossoms.

Her twin-tailed hair reflected light from the jump box's seams. The color was pink. It was a rare color, something that people called strawberry blonde.

I was desperate moments ago so I didn't notice that she was very pretty. Without a doubt, this beautiful girl was just like someone who'd come from a fantasy movie.

But, if you put her loveliness into a category, she'd be on the cute side, just like when you see a pretty child or a pretty doll.

And if you take a closer look, she was kind of small.

Based on my observation of her height, I bet that she's from the Junior High division. There is also a chance that she might be an Elementary student who came to this school for an internship.

---I can't believe that a small girl like her was the one who saved me a while ago.

It was an amazing feat. Definitely. But....

".....Christ...."

She changed her position, striding upon my legs and hugging my chest.

I was having a hard time breathing because of her.

---something grazed my nose.

"?"

It was a name tag where the girl's name was written.

Today was the starting ceremony so her year level and class were not written. It had only her name, and it was written [Kanzaki H. Aria].

".....?"

I wondered for a moment why her name tag was located on such a high angle.

I lowered my eyes and saw---

"---!"

That this girl, Kanzaki H. Aria's blouse was rolled up to a high angle!

It seemed that the fault lies with the force when we were caught in here by the explosion.

Thanks to that, her cute heart, spade, club, and diamond-printed bra was exposed for me to see.

[65A ---> B]....?

The tag attached to the strap made me realize one thing.

She was wearing a push-up plunge bra, or publicly known as [push-up] bra.

If you're going to ask me why I know about this thing, it'll be due to my elder brother who was a ladies' man. It's not because I'm researching about them or something.

This girl tried to fake her cup into B. But, it was a sad fact that she failed in her attempt. There wasn't really anything to push-up, to begin with.

But, if I think about it well, I might have been fortunate that she was flat-chested.

If it happened that she had big breasts and it was pushed into my face, it would have been an [out].

I would have broken the taboo, gone into [that] mode and I wouldn't be able to help myself from it.

".....You.....You...."

"---?"

"You're a pervert!"

A very cute, anime-like voice came out from the girl's mouth. I was kind of surprised since I realized she had great looks AND a cute voice. It's almost against the rules, being overly blessed like that.

"Y-y-y-you're the worst---!"

It seemed that Aria-san was fully awake now. She was giving me a furious glare while she rolled down her blouse.

The moment she finished pulling her blouse down, she started to bludgeon me with her fists.

The effortless hammer blows landed successively onto my head.

"H-hey! Stop, I said stop!"

"You molester! Ungrateful bastard! Brute!"

Aria, it seemed, thinks that I was the one who rolled up her blouse.

"You're wrong! I didn't.... I am not the one who---"

Until that moment, I was under the pressure of her hammer blows. But, gunshots resounded throughout the storage.

---Tadadadadadadadad!!

---What the hell?!

Something hit around where I was leaning on. I cringed from the powerful impact of the shots.

"Tsk, there's some more left!"

She gave a fierce look outside, drawing her guns beneath her skirt as she did so.

"What is there outside?"

"Those weird two-wheeled vehicles! Butei-killer's toys!"

Butei killer? Weird two-wheeled vehicle?--- oh, I remembered. I suppose she's talking about the Segway.

So, those were genuine bullets and not some pranks? Hell!

It was lucky though that the jumping box was bullet-proof. Thanks to Butei High.

But---I didn't know what I could do inside this box, trapped.

I didn't know. I was helpless. At least, at the WAY I am now.

"You! Pick-up your fire arms and fight. After all, you're a Butei student, aren't you?"

"It's impossible! I can't do anything!"

"We're already out-numbered! There are seven units outside!"

Seven units... That meant that seven sub-machine guns are aimed at us.

"---!"

That moment, something totally unexpected happened.

Aria leaned forward trying to get a good aim at the Segways outside.

And her breasts crashed onto my face.

Aria was busy shooting back at the Segways and didn't notice that she was pushing her breasts into my face.

Oh.

Shit---

This was an [out].

Why?---because there was.

I thought her chest was completely flat but I was wrong.

It was small, but there was an undeniable mound of soft flesh.

Right now, I'm literally head-first into a pair of soft and cute breasts, just like a water bun.

I didn't know that such small breasts could be so soft. I thought only big breasts had this kind of softness.

Though now was definitely a time of emergency---I was able to assess her breasts calmly.

That was because I already knew.

I already knew that I had broken the taboo that I set for myself.

I was feeling that sensation while I was held between Aria's breasts.

A sensation where I felt something within me growing larger, a sensation which was hard to put into words.

Ta-dud! Ta-dud!

Burning heat rushed through my veins as I felt my blood concentrating on my core.

I can't help it. I'll become that way again.

---Damn.

I've activated it.

I've turned on the Hysteria mode.....!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Gun-fire roared wildly above him. After a few moments, Aria's gun was out of ammo so she lowered her body inside the jump box to reload.

"---Did you get them?"

"I just dispersed them away from their firing range. They're just behind the trees outside so it's just a matter of time until they start shooting again."

"You're a strong girl. What you did was worthy of praise."

"....Huh?"

Aria raised an eyebrow at my way of speaking.

Oh no----I'm going to do it again.

It only took a moment to hesitate.

My arms went under her legs and her back. Then I stood up carrying her like a bride.

"---!"

"As a reward for your good work, I'll let you be a princess for a while."

Aria's face turned red in an instant. She opened her mouth wide, showing her sharp canine. In a funny way, her face looked like a ripe tomato.

I stepped on the rim of jump box and jumped out of it while holding Aria in my arms.

We landed near piled up mats and I lowered Aria on them.

Then, I arranged her into a sitting position so that she'd look like a doll.

"W-w-w-w-w-what now?"

Aria could only blink at my sudden change of character.

"A princess should just sit on her throne. I alone will be enough for all of them."

Oh, damn me.

It looks like I can't stop myself now.

"H-hey, what happened to you? Have you gone crazy?!"

Rapid sound of gunshots covered Aria's cute anime voice.

Tadadadadadadadadadadadad!

The UZI bullets started to assault the inside of the storage room once more.

But, the walls were all bullet proof and from their point of view, we were positioned on a dead angle so their shots were wasted for nothing.

A faint smile overcame my expression. As I did so, I started to walk towards the door, where their bullets crossed each other.

"No! It's dangerous out there! You'll just get shot!"

"It's much better than them shooting at you, isn't it?"

"I-I-I've been asking! Why did you change your character so suddenly? What are you planning to do?!"

I half-turned over and gave a wink to the red-faced and confused Aria and said---

"I'll protect you."

I took out a Matt Silver Beretta M-92F and exposed myself to the Segways.

All the seven Segways on the school grounds started to fire their UZI against me.

Those bullets---

Not one of them made it to my body.

There was no reason why I should get hit.

That was because I saw all of them.

The bullets were all in slow-motion for my current self.

Their accuracy was great; they were all aiming for my head.

I leaned back at a low angle and evaded their concentrated fire.

While maintaining my current posture, I waved my arm from right to left, letting out full-auto counter shots.

Even if I wasn't able to see where my bullets were headed, I knew where they would hit.

I shot a total of seven bullets---

And I knew that each of the shots went straight into the muzzle of those UZIs---

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

All seven UZIs blew up, away from those Segways.

Just from these seven bullets of mine.

* * *

After I confirmed the destruction of all of the seven Segways, I went back to the storage room.

When I entered the storage room, I saw that for some reason, Aria was back again inside the jumping box.

She stared at me, the upper half of her body out of the box. The expression on her face told me that she didn't get what was happening here.

When our eyes met, her stare turned into a glare and she quickly moved back inside the box.

....What?

She looked... upset.

"I don't owe you anything, you understand! I could have handled all those toys by myself. What I said was the truth, only the truth, and nothing but the truth."

She pretended to be tough while she was trying to do something inside the box.

It looks like she was trying to arrange her clothes.

I guess that'll be a bit hard.... Since I saw when I carried her earlier that the hook of her skirt was broken. Maybe it broke when we were caught by the explosion.

"By the way, let me remind you that what you did won't nullify what you did to me earlier! That was a forced act of obscenity! It's definitely a crime!"

Aria gave me a glare from the hole in the box where you put your fingers.

"Aria..... That was an unfortunate misunderstanding."

I loosened my belt and threw it inside the box.

"It was inevitable in that situation.... I hope you'll understand."

"You call that situation inevitable?!"

Aria came out of the box holding the belt that I gave her to keep her skirt up.

She came out with light steps and stood up right in front of me.

What?

Did she just stand up?

That was what came first within my mind. She was that small. Even with the horn-like ornament she used to band her hair, her height was probably only around 145. Only.

"I saw... with my own... eyes!"

Her look turned into a glare and she quickly turned red again.

She held her hand tightly and opened her rose-pink lips, trying to say something.

She made a stomp. Maybe she did that to add power to what she was going to say.

"Y-You were trying to, t-t-take my blouse off while I was unconscious!"

If she was embarrassed to say it, I think it'd be better if she didn't mention it in the first place.

"N-Not only t-t-that!"

Dud!

She stomped again. Does she hold a grudge against the floor?

"Y-y-y-y-y-you were looking at my breasts! That's a fact and it was a crime of obscenity caught in the act!"

Aria's face became even redder, if that was even possible. I noticed that her ears were turning red too.

"What! Were you! Trying to! Do! To me?! I'll hold you r-r-responsible for what you did!"

Dud! Dud! Dud-dud!

I guess its Aria's original version of a stomp-dance. If there was any.

By the way, what did she mean by me being responsible?

"Alright Aria, calm down. Try to think of things this way; I'm a High School student and not only that, I'm a sophomore starting today. Do you think

that a High School student will try to take the clothes off a girl from Junior High? We've got too much of an age gap---so you don't have to worry."

I told her with a gentle voice. She just stood there and opened her mouth wider. She raised her arms too. It seemed that she had lost her words because of what I said.

"I'm not a Junior High student!!"

DANG!

That stomp did it. The wooden floor finally broke.

---This is bad.

I tried to convince her but it looks like I failed.

I knew that women became irritated when people think that they are older than their actual age. This girl was violent, and if I don't ease her ill temper right now, the storage room floor might suffer serious damage.

".....That was my mistake, I'm sorry. I knew that you were an Elementary student who came here for an internship. Thanks for saving me, Aria-chan. You were great---"

I was about to say '---for your young age' when suddenly Aria bowed her head down.

Half of her face was covered in shadow so I didn't see her expression clearly.

But I heard the sound of her hands getting her guns under her skirt.

What now? Doesn't she get tired?

"I....should have never....rescued....this bastard...!"

Bang! Bang!

"Woah!"

My face turned white as I saw two bullet holes near my feet.

The girl just shot me! With two guns!

"I-A-M-A-S-O-P-H-O-M-O-R-E-H-I-G-H-S-C-H-O-O-L-S-T-U-D-E-N-T!!"

I just got out of major trouble a while ago and was back in the fire again.

"W-Wait!"

Aria raised her guns for a point-blank shot.

I jumped at her, catching her arms and twisting them behind her.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Click! Click!

Aria fired few shots out of reflex----but it only hit the floor.

Coming from the sound of her guns, I knew that she was out of ammo.

I was glad that I was in Hysteria mode. If I was in my normal self, I would have been lying on the floor with bullets inside me.

She twisted her body and we turned into a position where we were holding hands and forcing them to the opposite direction.

"---ugh!---ya!"

She jumped and twisted her body, throwing me away. It was like a skill used in Judo.

"Shit---!"

This girl knew martial arts too! Not only that, she was GOOD at it!

I landed with my back and used the vector of the throw to roll out of the storage room floor.

"You can't escape from me! You should know that I've never let a single target get away from me! You hear me? Never!---Huh? Where's my---?"

Aria was shouting out the words while her hands searched through the inner part of her skirt.

She was looking for the spare ammo she had in case she was out of bullets.

"I'm sorry."

I showed her the ammo cases that I stole from her when she threw me away. I threw them away---far from us.

"---That's my...!"

She followed the cases I threw away with her eyes and saw that it landed in a distant bush.

She turned to face me and raised her arms making big circles in the air. With her useless guns.

I interpreted it as her way of showing displeasure.

"I'll never forgive you now! Even if you kneel down in front of me!"

Aria returned her guns into their holster. Then, she inserted her hands in her back, drawing out two blades that she hid there.

Guns, Martial arts, and now this---?!

I was standing there dumb-founded when she jumped at me. She aimed her half-drawn katanas towards my shoulders.

I performed a back-roll and was able to evade it.

"A molester like you should just--- whthck!"

She raised a high-pitched cat-like voice and stumbled backward.

Under her were the bullets that I spread on the grounds.

I scattered them while she had her attention at her flying ammo cases.

"Y-You bastard---snobtch?!"

She tried to stand up but ended up stepping on another bullet and tumbling down. It was like a manga scene.

While she was down, I took the chance to get away from there.

Aria was a powerful fighter, but she lacked composure because of anger and embarrassment.

While she lacked composure, I was in Hysteria mode----

Even if there were one hundred FBI agents, I'd be able to get away from them.

I was thinking of those things when I heard Aria's empty threat.

"You coward! I'll make a big wind hole on you next time!"

That was the worst meeting that there ever was, covered with soot and dirt. It was how I, Tohyama Kinji, and the girl who'd be feared later as the 'Scarlet Ammo', Kanzaki H. Aria, first encountered one another.

2nd Ammo: Kanzaki H. Aria

(...I did it again...)

After the entrance ceremony which I ended up missing, I reported the incident to the administrative office in a gloomy mood, and trudged off to my new classes.

《Hysteria》 · 《Savant》 · 《Syndrome》 .

Or Hysteria Mode as I call it. For people with this syndrome, when β endorphins secreted in the brain increase beyond a certain level in romantic situations, it leads to a 30-fold increase in the neurotransmitters being released in the cerebrum, cerebellum and the spinal column causing the central nervous system and movement to accelerate.

The result being that while in hysteria mode the ability to think logically and make decisions, in addition to reflexes, rapidly increase and so forth.

Well, to put it simply:

When people with this special trait are sexually aroused, they temporarily enter a super mode, where they behave like a different person.

However, now that I had returned to normal, I was extremely depressed by the fact that I had changed into Hysteria Mode in front of Aria, a girl.

This ability should essentially be kept a secret.

Especially from women.

(That's because girls are...terrifying creatures...)

Men have the natural ability to power up when protecting women in order to be able to have children with them. It seems that hysteria mode is a highly evolved form of that instinct.

Because of that when I'm in Hysteria Mode, my weakness is that I will display a weird mentality towards girls.

First is that I will protect girls no matter what. Whenever a girl has problems or is in a pinch, I find myself wanting to use this power to help her.

Secondly, the one part of Hysteria Mode I can't stand is---

The fact that I start speaking and acting really melodramatically towards women.

The true ability of Hysteria Mode makes me act like an attractive guy in order to [leave children behind]..... The me in Hysteria Mode will be very nice to women, praising them, comforting them, gently caressing them, turning me into a terrifying gigolo character. Argh, whenever I remember it afterward I want to die.

(But then again, the more terrifying beings are.....women after all.)

When I think about it, the time I was in middle school, Kanagawa Butei High, was the worst.

A bunch of girls found out about my condition and used me.

They made me touch them here and there, activating Hysteria Mode, then forced me to do stuff. One who was bullied used me for revenge. Another wanted me to punish pervy teachers.

In short I was.....their personal [Ally of Justice].

(Shirayuki-like patterns also trouble me.)

This happened the morning of my entrance exam in Tokyo Butei High, which I took to escape girls from my town---

Due to my bad luck, Shirayuki, who was being chased by some delinquents, bumped into me and I fell on top of her, just like what would happen in a manga....there and then I transformed into Hysteria Mode.

Then, I beat up the delinquents who were chasing her, and as she cried, I said some sweet lines while gently comforting her until she stopped.

Since then, her natural burning meddling attribute started to be mysteriously spurred.

(I want to go live in a place far away from here where there are no girls...)

These DVD's from the book store are particularly good. First of all, I have no interest in these DVD's. Most importantly, I am saying that I can watch them without fear of transforming. In relation to real girls they do not quite compare, because real women have deadly weapons in their blouses and under their skirts, and they are freely walking around.

(Damn... Really, I've inherited a really troublesome disease...)

While scratching the back of my head, I went to my new class: 2nd year class A.

My family, the Tohyamas, have passed on this power from generation to generation.

This power that's so terribly burdensome, troublesome, embarrassing and even more than that....

---It is an abominable power that destroyed my older brother.

"Instructor, I would like to sit next to that person over there."

I was inside my class, 2-A, and at the beginning of homeroom-

I was stunned by my own misfortune: I was in the same class as the twin-tailed girl from this morning. She suddenly pointed at me and started saying some troublesome things.

As she said those words the whole class was rendered speechless, and at the same time, they all turned to look at me.

Waaaaa! They all started cheering.

I-

I fell from my chair.

I was speechless. Just... speechless, really.

The teacher said 'hehehe, then first of all...we have a transfer student who transferred in this semester. Let's have her do a self introduction'.

At this point, right before she even started, I had this bad premonition.

She stood up from the seat behind me, and proceeded to stand at the podium. That tiny girl stated with precision/sharpness that her name was Kanzaki H. Aria, and that she was nobility...

What should I do? I thought as I started to shiver, I'm already out of hysteria mode, and only my other half is able to fight her.

And that's when she suddenly said that she wanted to sit next to me.

"W-Why?!"

I finally managed to ask.

'Ally of justice'. Although I don't intend to be used as one, I still am, regardless of what I want. Could it be that she does not realize that I have this special power?

Her actions seem to indicate she doesn't know... Though that might not be the case. After all, she did attack me at the end of our last meeting.

She deliberately sat next to me very slowly. I felt as though she wanted to kill me.

"Yo... Kinji isn't that great! The spring of your youth has finally come! Teacher! Can I request a seat change between Irio-san and Seki!"

The big guy sitting to my right stood up and shook my hand like I was a member of parliament who had just been elected and he was my personal secretary.

Standing at 190cm with his pointy hair was Mutou Gouki.

Once, during the time I was in Assault, we were heading towards the scene of a crime, and luckily for us, we had an honor student from Logi. He drove around in what could only be called a scooter, but it drove like a rocket. Only people with a certain aptitude or skill could drive it.

"My my. The girls seem to be more assertive nowadays. Anyways Mutou-kun, please switch seats."

The teacher looked between Aria and I somewhat happily, while Mutou, understanding the circumstance, immediately replied with an OK.

Finally, the whole class room began to applaud.

You guys are completely wrong! I don't know this person at all. Not long ago, this girl pulled out her guns and shot at me; she's really a ferocious girl. She tried to erase me!

When I began to try and protest to the teacher, Aria interrupted me by saying,

"Kinji, this is your belt from before."

And calling me all of a sudden without any honorifics, she threw my belt at me that I had lent to her before. Looking at Aria's uniform carefully, it seemed that she was wearing a fresh uniform.



After I had caught the belt she tossed at me-

"Riko understands! Totally understands! ---This is them raising a flag!

The person sitting to my left, Mine Riko, suddenly pushed out her chair and stood up.

"Ki-kun isn't wearing a belt right now! That belt was being kept by that girl with twin tails! This is a mystery? This mystery was solved through inference by Riko! She did it!"

Riko, who was as short as Aria, was part of the Inquesta class, and was the biggest idiot.

Proof of this was that her Butei High School uniform was filled with fluttery frills, and she made it so that it was a sweet Lolita fashioned dress.

Incidentally, Ki-kun was a strange nickname that she called me because she was just strange herself.

"Ki-kun had to have done something that would make him take his belt off in front of her. To leave her room, and a belt, between two people it has to be a hot hot steamy romance, where he forgot it in the midst of making love!"

Riko made that idiotic deduction while taking off the two ribbons on her hair.

Making love? You can't seriously be thinking that.

But that's the idiots' center, the Butei High.

And this deduction made my classmates go crazy.

"Ki, Kinji, when did you get such a cute girl!?" "I thought that you had no presence whatsoever!" "Normally you act like you aren't good with girls, and that you aren't interested in others, but you're actually like this secretly!?" "How shameless!"

The students of Butei High, except for those in general studies, aren't separated by classes, nor are they divided by age. Therefore, joining any special studies is just like joining a club. Because of this, there's a very high percentage of classmates that know each other...

But ganging up on a common enemy at the beginning of a new semester...isn't that abnormal?

"Yo-you people..."

I crouched over my desk, holding my head--

In a mere moment, the appearance of the two rapid gunshots rendered the lively and chaotic atmosphere ice cold.

--Those were the gunshots fired by the blushing Aria, who had drawn her guns.

"Yo-you dare say that we are lovers...? Shut up!"

On the walls that her arms were outstretched towards, holes had appeared. One on the left, and one on the right.

The casings that were ejected from her gun clattered to the floor, drawing the attention of everyone in the silent classroom.

That idiot Riko was rocking her body back and forth like she was doing an avant-guard dance, and she slowly, slowly, sat back down.

.....In Butei High, there is a rule concerning gunfire. The rule is 'Don't fire more than you need to', which means, you can shoot as much as you like. However, most of the students here are Butei that are desensitized to gunfire, since it is part of their daily routine. But, although it's like that...

Firing a gun during the introductions of the new semester, she's got to be the first one.

"Remember this! If anyone dares to talk rubbish like that again..."

That was the first sentence that Kanzaki H. Aria said to us Butei High students.

"I'll make a hole in him!"

Once lunch break came, everyone approached me and started to ask me questions, but I managed to escape to the roof of the Science building, away from all the idiots in my class.

Anyways, even if they ask me about Aria, I can't answer them. After all, I had just met her this morning, and all she did was save me from the bikejacking incident, which means that I knew absolutely nothing about her.

As I listlessly sighed...I heard a few girls chatting while approaching the roof.

Their voices sounded familiar. It didn't seem like our class, rather, they were girls from Assault.

I quickly stood up and hid in the shadows, just like a criminal.

"From the note that I received from the Masters just now, it seems like a 2nd year's bike exploded. That couldn't be Kinji, could it?"

"Well, that's what I think. He was the only one who didn't make it to the opening ceremony, after all."

"Woah, Kinji's pretty unlucky today. Not only did his bike blow up, but Aria too?"

The 3 girls that were sitting side by side next to the iron fence were talking about me.

This made me so uncomfortable that it felt like there were insects crawling all over my face, but I quietly stayed where I was.

"Kinji was pretty pitiful just now."

"I think so too. Aria's been looking for Kinji everywhere."

"Ah. I was asked by Aria too. She was asking what kind of Butei Kinji was, and what kind of record he had. So I just said 'He was amazing back in Assault'.

"I saw Aria just now at the entrance to Masters. I bet she was trying to find Kinji's records."

"Woah. Looks like she really loves Kinji."

As the relevant party, I was inadvertently listening to them talk about me.

So she was looking for me since morning...which is to say, she's been asking after me ever since the bikejacking incident?

"I feel really bad for Kinji. He doesn't like girls, but now he's being pestered by Aria. I'm not sure what kind of education she had back in Europe, but she's completely tactless."

"But, isn't Aria pretty popular among the boys?"

"Ah, that's right. She just switched schools in the 3rd semester, and yet the whole school is hers already. I also heard that the Photography Club managed to take a picture of her during PE, and they're making a lot of money."

"I heard that too. They took a picture of her while she was figure skating with the cheerleaders, and they've already sold out. The photos from the new gym class too."

What kind of class is that? Is this school really normal?

"From what I've heard, she doesn't have any friends. She also constantly excuses herself."

"During lunch she was alone, just sitting in the corner of the classroom."

"Wow, how disgusting."

The words of these girls made my heart heavier and heavier.

I, who isn't interested in others, didn't even know about her existence...

But this Aria, who attends Butei High, where weird people congregate, appears to be a special existence as well.

If one wants to switch from Butei High to a normal High school, there's a time restriction.

Because, according to the Butei rules, all the guns and swords that the students own are part of the school uniform, and therefore must be registered with the Public Safety Commission. Therefore, until the re-registration period in April, one is not allowed to leave school.

If there are students who wish to switch schools, they have to submit an application to the Masters 6 months in advance. However -- I've already prepared the application. I decided to wait 2 days before I submitted it, and then April next year, I can finally leave the world of Butei.

(Although I say this...I'll feel sad about leaving this room behind.)

--It's the evening.

I, who finally managed to get away from those idiots in my class, sat on the sofa by myself, looking at the red stained Tokyo sunset outside my window.

From January of this year, I will be the only one staying in this dormitory.

This dormitory was originally meant for 4 people. However, because I switched to Inquesta, and since there were no other applications for rooms from anybody in Inquesta, I have no roommates.

But for me, that strange coincidence is great fortune.

I can freely relax in a place where none of those weirdos from Butei High will disturb my peaceful life. It's great to live by myself.

(Ahh, so clean...)

The bike-jacking incident from this morning seems as if it had never happened.

About that incident, Repier has already recovered the wreckage of the Segways, and Inquesta has started its investigation.

...However, in Butei High, where daily life is full of danger, attempted murder cases like these usually go unsolved. This is an unchangeable reality. Maybe I'm already desensitized to this from when I was in Assault, or maybe it's because Aria's been bothering me all day, but right now, as the victim, I really don't care.

But, who...would do this? This is too vicious for a mere prank.

The imitator of the 'Butei Killer' must be a bombing maniac.

Bombing maniacs are one of the most despicable types of criminals in the world, because they don't choose their targets. Normally, the reason for bombing is to attract the attention of society, so that one can make demands.

Ding - Dong.

So, from that perspective, it was just bad luck that it was my bike that was targeted?

Ding Dong Ding Dong Ding - Dong!

Or is it someone specifically targeting me? Why would anyone hate me so much?

Ding Ding Dong Ding Dong Ding Dong Ding Dong Ding Ding Ding
Ding Ding Ding - Dong! Ding Dong Ding Dong Ding Dong Ding - Dong!

Argh! Annoying!

Somebody's been ringing the doorbell of the dormitory since a second ago. I was pretending that no one was home, but it appears that it didn't work.

What are they trying to do. I've already been annoyed enough today. At least let me get some peace and quiet after school.

"Who is it.....?"

I open the door impatiently.

"You're too slow! When I ring your doorbell, you should open it within 5 seconds!"

Woah!

A girl was standing there, her hands on her hips. She was staring at me with her pink irises--

"Kan-Kanzaki!?"

Standing in the doorway, was Kanzaki H. Aria, still wearing her uniform.

I rubbed my eyes like in manga, to make sure that I wasn't hallucinating, but there she was.

Why is she here!?

"You can call me Aria."

Without even giving me time to respond, Aria had already taken off her shoes, and entered my dormitory.

"Ah, hey!"

I reached out to try and grab her, but I didn't manage to, because her height was like that of a child, so she just ducked under my grasp

brush

only leaving the feeling of her twin tails brushing through my hands.

"Wait, don't just come in!"

"Bring my luggage in! Hey, where's the bathroom?"

Aria completely ignored my presence, and continued to look around inside the rooms. She quickly discovered the location of the bathroom, and quickly strode in.

...This isn't good.

This is Butei High.

And the origin of the word 'Butei' is 'Armed Detectives'.

It looks like I was followed.

"Anyways, your luggage..."

I looked around in a daze, and I saw what appeared to be her luggage in front of the door. It had a very well known brand name engraved on it, and there were some tiny, yet beautiful patterns on the handle.

Ugh, this is too dangerous.

If I let the neighboring students find out that there's a girl's luggage in front of my door, who knows what kind of hell will break loose.

Also, this morning, I told Shirayuki that this apartment block housed the Male dormitories.

"Is it just you living here?"

Aria walked out of the bathroom, having washed her hands and brought her luggage, which held some abnormally heavy stuff, in without so much as looking at me. Having done that, she started investigating the state of my rooms.

She had already reached the innermost part of the living room, where the windows were.

"Well, this is fine, I guess."

What's that supposed to mean?

Aria spun around, illuminated by the glow of the sunset.

stare Those long twin tails followed her movements, drawing a beautiful arc in the air.

"--Kinji. Be my slave!"

.....

.....

.....I don't believe it.

Hey you. You're completely unbelievable.

When I thought you were about to save me, you drew your swords and guns. Not only do you sit beside me in class, but you invade my house, and then you say something like 'Be my slave!'?

"Hey! Why aren't you getting me anything to drink! You uneducated piece of trash!"

Fu!

Aria's skirt flew upwards as she plopped her hips down on the sofa I was sitting on not too long ago. She wiggled a bit and tilted her legs, allowing me to see the pair of guns strapped to her thighs. She's still carrying guns after school? Is she paranoid?

"Coffee! Espresso rungo doppio! Italian sugar! I'm giving you 1 minute!"

You're the uneducated one...

And anyways, what's with that coffee? It sounds like a magic spell.

I, who couldn't think of a way to get her out of my house, reluctantly made her a cup of instant coffee,

"?"

Aria used both her hands to bring the cup to her nose and took a sniff.

"Is this really coffee?"

It looks like she doesn't know about the existence of instant coffee.

"I don't have anything else; you'll have to make do with it."

"...It tastes weird. It tastes kind of like Greek coffee...actually..."

"Stop talking about the flavor. There's something else we need to discuss."

I sat at a chair by the table, took a sip of coffee, and pointed at the girl who had intruded into my house.

"Thanks for saving me this morning. Also...I'm sorry for saying things to make you angry. But, why did you chase me to my house?"

I said, pursing my lips.

Aria, holding her cup, turned her camellia eyes to face me.

"Don't you understand?"

"How could I understand?"

"I didn't think it would take you this long... Mmm...however, when the time comes, you'll understand. We'll just leave it at that."

Just leave it at that?

"I'm hungry."

Aria suddenly changed the subject, and daintily adjusted her position on the sofa.

This womanly act made my cheeks redden, and I looked away.

"Is there nothing to eat?"

"Nothing."

"There can't be nothing. What do you normally eat?"

"When I want to eat, I just get something from the convenience store downstairs."

"Convenience store? Oh, that mini supermarket. OK, go ahead."

"What are you talking about?"

"You really are stupid... Go get me something to eat, of course. It's already dinner time, right?"

This isn't good. She isn't listening to me at all.

And anyways, you've decided to eat dinner here?

I really wish you would leave.

I massaged my head, hoping to get rid of my headache. Suddenly, Aria jumped off the sofa as if she was spring-loaded, and slowly approached me, step by step.

Hey, this is too close. While I was thinking this, she had already approached so close that all I could see was her chin.

"Hey, does the convenience store sell Matsumoto's 'Peach Buns'? I want to eat those."

A Butei needs to constantly stay alert of three things: darkness, poison, and women.

And I had just bought seven peach buns for the third reason, Aria.

Peach buns were popular some time ago, but now, these were all the convenience store had in stock. A moment ago, I had thought that Aria wasn't thinking of eating them all in one go, but now, as I sat next to the table, I watched Aria demolish the fifth peach bun.

As usual, I ate a pork cutlet, but this time I continually glared at Aria while I ate, trying to convey 'Get out'. with my eyes. However, Aria completely ignored me and patted her cheeks while devouring her sixth peach bun. Are those really that good?

"...Anyways, what's this about me being a slave? What's that supposed to mean?"

"I'm letting you join my Assault squadron. To do Butei missions with me."

"What are you talking about. The reason I switched to Inquesta, the most normal Butei agency, was because I hated how troublesome Assault was. Also, I've already prepared to switch to a normal school. I'm already tired of being a Butei, and you still want to bring me back to that crazy place?--No way."

"I hate 3 things about what you said."

"Listen to what I'm saying..."

"'No way', 'Tired', and 'Troublesome'. Those 3 points are the only things restricting the possibilities for humans. Don't ever say anything like that in front of me again. Understand?"

With that, Aria finished her seventh and last peach bun, and twiddled her fingers, as if she had something else to say.

"As for Kinji's position, you can be my 'Front'."

'Front' is short for 'Front Man'. The task of the front man is to take point for the main maneuvers of the Butei squadron.

It's an extremely risky and dangerous position.

"No. Why me?"

"Why does the sun rise? Why does the moon shine?"

Once again she says something completely out of the blue.

"Kinji's questions are just like a child's questions. Since you're a Butei, go find out my reasoning for yourself."

I don't want to hear that from you, who really looks like a kid. I wanted to say that there and then, but thought back to how I was nearly killed this morning, so I swallowed my words.

--Anyways,

I'm starting to understand.

Talking to her is like talking to a brick wall.

If I want to argue against Aria, who only knows how to make demands, I have to come straight to the point about my own demands.

Deciding this, I hardened my resolve.

"Anyways, please go back. I want to stay here by myself. So get out."

"Well, when the time comes, I shall do so of my own accord."

"When is that time, exactly?"

"Not until you agree to join my Assault squadron."

"It's already evening, you know?"

"I'll go through anything to get you to join. I don't have much time left. If you don't agree--"

"How can I accept? What if I don't agree? What will you do if I don't? Do your worst."

Hearing my abrupt refusal, Aria stared at me with those big eyes, and said,

"If you don't agree, I'll stay here."

--Ha!?

My face started twitching.

"You... Wait a moment! Stop kidding around! I'm not going to let you stay here! Get out!"

I was so surprised by what she said, that I had trouble keeping my pork cutlet from flying off my lap.

"Shut up! If I say I'm going to stay, then I'll stay! I knew this would turn into a siege!"

point! Aria pointed at her luggage while screaming.

So those were all of the things she needed to stay--!

Why is she going so far? What's she trying to do?

Why would me returning to Assault help her at all?

"--Get out!"

I wasn't the one who said that.

What should have come from my mouth came instead from Aria's.

"Wh-why should I get out! Is this your house!?"

"This is a punishment for you not opening the door earlier! Get out and calm yourself down! You can't come back in for a while!"

Aria held up her fists while baring her canines at me.

So...I somehow managed to get kicked out of my own house.

I stood for a while inside the convenient store, looking at manga. But I felt that it would be too impolite just to read it, so I bought it to bring upstairs to my room.

And like a thief...I softly opened the door. This is my house, after all.

Hmm?

I couldn't sense Aria's presence inside.

I peeked into the kitchen and living room: she wasn't there.

This is great. Looks like God answered my pleas. She finally went home.

I sighed with relief, and since I had just gone outside, I went towards the bathroom to wash my hands--when.

I noticed some sounds coming from the shower.

The light was on, and the glass door leading into the shower was misty.

A blurry outline was visible inside, extending her leg while whistling a song.

Ahh, so she was taking a bath after all.

--Huh!?

---A bath!?

tap tap

I quickly retreated back to the main part of the bathroom.

So she kicked me out because she wanted to take a bath.

I gingerly looked down, but all I saw was Aria's school uniform in the laundry basket. In the basket I could see the gun strap she used under her skirt, and sticking out were her guns. Digging deeper, I could see two wakizashis sticking out of her blouse.

Crash

From the door came the noise of Aria splashing around in the bath, and my heart nearly skipped a beat.

This is too weird.

This is far too absurd.

And now, a new sound came out of the blue, even though I was already panicking.

....Ding, Dong....

a very politely pressed doorbell!

Thi-this method of pressing the doorbell...

(Co-could it be Shirayuki!?)

"Wo-woah!?"

Dong!

In this dangerous situation, I tripped on something and fell heavily to the floor, while rushing to the corridor.

"Kin.....Kin-chan? Are you OK?"

came Shirayuki's voice from the door.

Thi-this isn't good. She heard me.

Now I can't even pretend that no one's in.

"Ah, I'm fine, I'm fine."

Pretending to be calm, I walked towards the door...

A red hakama along with white sleeves-- Shirayuki stood there in her Miko outfit with a mysterious bag in her hands.

"Wh-what's wrong with you? Why are you wearing this while going out?"

I tried to keep an eye on the bathroom, while rudely addressing her.

"Ah...th-this is. I-it's because my classes went very late...once I finished making dinner I immediately came over to give it to Kin-chan, so I didn't have time to change... If that isn't OK, then I'll go back and change immediately."

"N-no, that's OK."

I quickly stopped Shirayuki, who really seemed as if she was going to return home.

The classes she's talking about are probably the SSR.

SSR, that amazingly strange special class, is short for Supernatural Searching Research, a class focused upon research on ability users. I

don't understand much of it, but apparently, Shirayuki is a top student there as well.

Ah, this isn't the time to talk about this! Right now, paranormal activities are happening in my house!

"Hey, Kin-chan. The notice this morning about the exploding bicycle...could it be the 2nd year they were talking about was you..."

"Ah, yeah. It was me."

The reason I answered so cheerfully, was because...this is not an exaggeration...Shirayuki charged me and only stopped when she had thrust her face within 10 cm of mine.

"Ar-are you OK!?... Are you hurt anywhere!? I-I'll treat any wounds for you!"

"I'm OK, don't touch me."

"Ah, OK...but it's great that you're safe. But attacking Kin-chan...I can't forgive whoever did it! I will definitely hunt him down and tear him apart...I mean take him into custody!"

Just now did she...say what I think she said? No, I probably heard wrong.

Yeah, I heard wrong.

"I-it's OK. This is just a regular occurrence in Butei High. Alright, let's not talk about this anymore!"

"Uh, right. But...OK."

Looking at Shirayuki, it seemed as if she had something else to say, but in the end, she lightly nodded.

Ahh, she's so obedient. I wish that twin-tailed girl would learn from Shirayuki.

"...But...there's something. Kin-chan seems a little...strange, tonight."

"Strange? Me?"

"You're more cold than usual..."

Woah, your senses are way too acute!

"N-no I'm not! You were looking for me, right? What is it?"

Anyways, I need to get Shirayuki out of here now!

Because, if Aria comes out into the corridor now, just wearing a towel, I'm finished!

"Ah...about that. I have this."

Shirayuki jerkily handed the bag in her hands to me.

"I made bamboo shoots for you tonight, since...I have to go to Mount Osore tomorrow for training, since it's spring. I won't be able to make dinner for Kin-chan for a while..."

"Ah, OK. Thanks, thanks a lot. If that's all, then you should start heading back now, OK?"

Seeing me accept the bag, Shirayuki's face lit up. Also, her cheeks reddened slightly.

"I-I made two meals for you in one day! I-I'm almost like your wi-wife... Ah, what am I saying. Aha, Ahaha. Isn't that weird? Yeah, I'm weird! ...Ki-Kin-chan, do you...think I'm weird?"

"I got it, I got it! I understand, so please go back, Shirayuki!"

"You're saying 'I got it!'...wh-which means that Kin-chan also thinks I'm..."

For some reason, Shirayuki raised her head to face me, who just said whatever I could to try and get her to go home, with a face full of emotion.

--Splash.

The noise of water came from the bathroom.

Splash! My heart jumped into my throat.

"? Is someone in there?"

"There is nobody inside!"

I myself didn't know why I started speaking politely, but I fiercely pushed Shirayuki out the door like a Sumo wrestler.

"...Kin-chan, you aren't hiding anything from me, are you?"

Shirayuki's eyes suddenly lost all expression, and in a mere moment, became a blank slate.

"No. No, no, no. How could I? I can't hide anything from you!"

"...Is that so? That's fine then."

Hearing my denial, Shirayuki flashed a smile as fresh as a spring breeze, and finally turned away.

Th....thank God.

The Tiger at the gate has been taken care of.

Closing the door, I threw the bamboo shoots to one side and rushed to the bathroom.

I felt that if I didn't do this, I'd be ambushed by the Wolf at the back door.

And, knowing Aria's ferocious personality, if she ever found out that I came back while she was bathing, she would immediately fire upon me without warning. So, to protect my life, I have to hide those guns and swords.

Thinking that way, I crouched in front of the laundry basket, and while I gingerly stretched my hand inside--

Click



The door to the bath was opened by Aria.

"[--!]"

Killing intent filled up the silence.

We stared at each other, locking eyes.

Fu~, the smell of Gardenia wafted out of the bath.

".....per...PERVERT!"

Aria had loosened her hair, and she was not wearing even one thread of cloth. She used her right hand to cover her chest, and her left hand to cover...that...place below the stomach.

Seeing both my hands stretched inside her school uniform, Aria's hair stood on end.

"You....You've got it wrong...!"

I hurriedly grabbed her weapons and put my hands up, wanting to prove my innocence.

--but I failed completely.

Because I was so panicked, I didn't notice that there was something hanging on the blades.

There was something fluttering on the wakizashi on the right.

And there was something fluttering on the wakizashi on the left.

Hanging on the wakizashi, were Aria's bra and panties, raised like a flag.

The childish cotton underwear was dotted with polka suits, and it found itself fluttering on the blade I was holding.

"~~~~~DIE!!"

Thud!

"Huh!?"

Aria assaulted me so quickly, I was unable to even go into Hysteria Mode.

An unavoidable kick slammed into me, turning my body into a [<] character.

"Go to hell! You big pervert!!"

Bong!

Aria leaped and violently brought her knee to my face, while snatching back her underwear. I was still hanging on to her wakizashi for dear life.

That knee came to a stop a full 10 centimeters from my face.

Oh God.

I'd like to ask you something.

Why must I endure this punishment?

Also. What eroge is this from?

Hey you, is this the time to think about that?

I looked straight at the line that Aria drew on the ground while lying on my bed. She said, 'If you dare approach this line, I will kill you'.

She had obviously used marker to draw it, not only that, but an oil-based one.

I looked at the other bunk bed, full of resentment, only to see one of her twin-tails drooping off the bed. Damn it. I really want to yank on it right now.

".....Fuuu.....Peach bun pyramid..."

drip

Aria was sound asleep. Not only was she sleep talking, I could also hear her drooling in her sleep. Ah, this really pisses me off. Also, do peach buns have anything to do with pyramids?

This is my room, I shouldn't need to worry about these kinds of evil intruders.

But, wearing pink pajamas reminiscent of a jumpsuit, Aria had brought both her guns into the bedroom.

Although I had gone to bed immediately after Aria, I wasn't sleepy at all, so all I could do was lie on my bed, watching her sleep.

This bedroom was originally for four people, so there were two bunk beds. Well, as expected, Aria took the top bunk of the bed, as far away from me as she could get. Also, I thought that I saw a tripwire on the ground, leading to an anti-personnel landmine. It's probably just me. Yeah, there's no way she'd put something like that down.

But really, she's so troublesome.

Not only does she barge into my life and put restrictions on my movements, she also inconsiderately said--

--Come back to Assault to do Butei missions with me?

I don't have anything that I want to do.

I can be anything. I don't care if I don't do anything amazing.

As long as I don't have to be a Butei.

The only work I hate, is that of a Butei.

While thinking about this, I...slipped into an uneasy sleep.

"Idiot Kinji! Wake up!"

Bang!

An iron fist pounded into my abdomen,

Bash!

and a foot stomped onto my exhausted face.

Aria, wearing black knee socks, continued to grind my face into the bed.

It was bright outside. Looks like it's morning already.

"What are you doing!"

"Breakfast! Make me breakfast!"

"Who...cares...about...you!"

I pushed Aria's foot off my face with all my strength.

"I'm hungry!"

"Then stay that way, idiot!"

"A mere Kinji dares to call me an idiot!?"

What is 'a mere' supposed to mean?

I rolled around left and right, avoiding her punches. Seeing an opening, I jumped off my bed and made my way out of the bedroom.

Why do I have to use these kinds of 007 moves, just to wake up in my own house?

"I'm hungry! Hungry hungry hungry hungry hungry hungry hungry!"

"You should be fine if you're able to shout so loudly!"

I changed into my uniform, got my cellphone, strapped on my gun, and grabbed my bag, all the while dodging, parrying, and slipping around Aria's punches and kicks.

This feels exactly like battle training back in Assault.

whoosh! I stopped in front of the door to put on my shoes, and dodged the flurry of kicks that Aria fired off at me. I put on my shoes, and stood there.

"Aria."

I put my hand on Aria's creamy white forehead, while she was still trying to punch me.

I straightened my arm, leaving her unable to do anything but flail at me ineffectively.

Alright. It seems that I've grasped the method of keeping her at bay.

But, I shouldn't have to get used to this kind of thing...

"What?"

Since she couldn't hit me anymore, Aria calmed down a little and looked up at me.

"We're going to school separately. You go first."

"Why?"

"Why? If you're seen coming out of here with me, all hell will break loose. This is the boy's dormitory, you know."

"You're trying to trick me and escape, right!?"

"Not only are we in the same class, we sit side by side! Where am I supposed to escape to!?"

Aria puffed out her cheeks unhappily.

"It doesn't matter what you do. We're leaving separately."

"No way! Don't even think about running away! Remember Kinji, you're my slave!"

Aria grabbed onto my arm, with a stance that said 'I'm not letting go!'

"Get...off...me...! Hey!"

"Uwaah!"

Baring her canines, she bit down on my hand!

"OWWWWW---!"

Are you a lion??

I extracted my hand from Aria's mouth, and glanced at my watch. It was 7:54 right now.

This isn't good. We won't be able to make it to the bus at 7:58.

This isn't the time to fight with her.

From today onwards, I can't miss that bus.

Because my bicycle was blown into pieces...

"You little...germ...!"

Unable to do anything else, I dragged Aria, who was clinging to my arm, with me.

She's so annoying! She's really so annoying! How troublesome can she be!? But, dammit! She smells so nice! ...What am I thinking about.

I'm finished.

I'm totally done.

My daily routine has been completely annihilated by that random intruder, Aria.

And a prerequisite of my current goal-- 'Be a normal person'. is to have a normal daily routine.

So, I decided to use the time after 5th period to research a method of combating Aria.

In Butei High, periods 1-4 are just like a normal high school, learning normal subjects. However, from period 5 onwards, we split up into our special classes to practice.

Aria should be doing combat training in Assault right now.

So I'll use this opening to find a place she won't be able to find me, and stealthily prepare my counter plan.

Thinking this way, I did something I hadn't done for a long while. I accepted an Inquesta mission, just so I could leave the school naturally.

"Kinji."

But immediately after walking out of the Butei special class building, I saw Aria lying in ambush. I sank to the floor, my hopes shattered.

"Why...are you here...?"

"Because you're here."

"That isn't an answer! What about your Assault classes? Is it really fine if you skip them?"

"I already have enough credits to graduate."

Aria stared at me with her camellia eyes, not even letting me work up the spirit to get angry.

A girl, not only that, but an amazingly beautiful girl, waiting for you at the door of the school. Isn't that the dream of all High school boys? However, this girl gets trigger happy without the slightest provocation. I believe that that kind of vicious girl doesn't really fit the scene.

"What kind of commissions do you normally accept?"

"It has nothing to do with you. The commissions I accept are easy missions befitting an E rank Butei like me. Go away."

The students in Butei High, after receiving a small amount of training, are able to accept paid commissions from the general populace. If a Butei runs into an incident on the street, they're allowed to take care of it too. The results of these commissions, along with the results of tests, determines the [rank] of a student. The ranks go from A~E. Above this, there's also the special S rank. During the entrance exam, I was ranked S.

However, that's the result...of Shirayuki, who managed to get me into Hysteria Mode for the exam.

"You're E rank right now?"

"That's right. Because I didn't take part in the test at the end of the 3rd week, in my first year. Anyways, I don't really care what rank I am."

"Well, ranks don't mean anything anyway. Forget about that, tell me your commission for today."

"I don't need to tell you anything."

"How would you like some extra holes?"

Aria drew her guns angrily.

"Today...I'm looking for a cat."

"...A cat?"

"We're going to Omi to find a lost kitten. The reward is 10000 yen, and .1 credits."

This was the commission with the lowest reward and danger that I could find on the Inquesta board.

However, she still persisted in keeping up with me, to the point where she was almost sprinting.

"Don't follow me."

"Don't mind me, just go on with your Butei activities."

"Denied. Don't follow me."

"Do you hate me that much?"

"I hate you more than you know. Don't follow me."

"If you dare say 'Don't follow me' again, I'll help you make some new holes."

I had no wish for any new holes and I had no way to resist her, so all I could do was take the subway to Omi with Aria following me every step of the way.

Omi used to be a street for warehouses, however, the place had been renovated and now, it's full of high grade apartment blocks and shops.

"Since we're looking for a cat, what method are you going to use to find it?"

"I don't have a method. I'm just going to look everywhere for it. Anyways...why don't you tell me what you think? Since you asked me, you should have thought of something, right?"

"I don't have one either. I'm not good at plans. I didn't inherit that most important of traits,"

said Aria without a trace of emotion, looking up at me.

"Hey, I'm hungry."

"It's just past lunch... Did you not have anything during the break?"

"I did, but I'm hungry again."

...You digest things way too fast.

"Buy me something, OK?"

"Must you weigh me down everywhere I go..."

But...

I spent all my time looking for a fitting commission, so I didn't have lunch as well.

Well, whatever. I'd prefer to have my body hole-free, so let's just go to McDonalds to get something to eat.

As a slave, I followed my queen's orders, and got her the huge hamburger meal that she wanted...

Waiting outside, Aria seemed to be in a reverie as she stared at the displays of the boutiques.

She was staring at a shimmery dress on a mannequin, all the while looking back at her own body.

.....Fu.

That expression... So that's how it is. That's the appearance she would like to have.

Forget about it, there's no use in wanting it. Your elementary school figure will never ever develop.

"Hey."

"--Ah."

Aria turned around, and seemed to notice that I was secretly laughing at her.

Her cheeks reddened, and she waved both her hands around.

"--Th-that isn't it! I-I just have a slender body! This is called slender!"

"I didn't say anything..."

Saying that, I strode into the opposing park. I found a random bench, and sat down, placing my McDonalds bag next to me. Aria, as if she had something to say, sat down next to me.

Fuah. Her Butei High skirt fluttered, allowing me a sight of her guns for a moment. Mutou from Logi changed the name of that area from 'Panchira' to 'Gunchira'... Now that I think about it, that guy is a complete idiot.

All the skirts of the girls at Butei High are very short. The reason for this is, if an emergency arises, they need to be able to draw their guns quickly. Of course, Aria's skirt was no exception.

However, that sight from just now doesn't excite me at all. Probably because she looks just like an elementary school student.

"Hariha (Aria). Let's split up while looking in the park."

"Fwy? (Why?)"

We were trying to eat our hamburgers while talking.

"Look around, and you'll see."

I took a sip of my coke, and placed it on the bench while indicating around with my eyes.

In this park--there are a lot of young couples.

This place is near the seashore, and is both new and beautiful, so it's a famous dating site.

The whole reason I came here is, although it's possible that the cat might be here, since it's one of the parks in Omi, the real reason is that, with this sight, I thought that Aria would stay away from me.

This plan seems to be working, Aria is...

"Ah..."

Once she saw a college couple stuck together like wood carvings sitting on the opposite bench, she froze, with a french fry still stuck in her mouth.

Afterward, she looked at me, then looked back at the couple, then back at me. All at once, she started blushing furiously.

"...uh. Uun!"

At that moment, Aria saw a couple holding hands while walking by. She hurriedly hugged her own hands to herself. Looks like she wouldn't hold hands with me under the pain of death.

"Right? It'd be better if you went back, Aria. If we're seen walking together like this, people will say we're going out again. I don't like to attract attention, and you would hate it if the person you liked had this kind of misunderstanding, right?"

"Somebody I like!"

Aria's red ruby-like eyes opened wide, and she refuted me with that voice worthy of a Seiyuu.

"I-I-I don't like anyone! Also, ro-romance is a waste of time, there's no need for it! It-it really is useless!"

...You aren't a kid...there's no need to have such a reaction.

Looks like she can't stand anything related to love.

A weakness!

"Anyways, you wouldn't like your friends to misunderstand, right?"

"Friends... I don't have any friends, nor do I need them. People can say whatever they like. I don't care what others say."

Slurp----

I'm not sure if it was because she wanted to hide her embarrassment, but Aria sucked noisily at her straw.

"I applaud the fact that you don't care what others think. However, there's something I'd like to say."

"What is it?"

"That's my coke."

Pffftt!

Aria sprayed out the coke that was in her mouth.

No way. Is that really something a beautiful high school girl like you would do?

Seeing that I was staring straight at her, Aria's cheeks reddened once again--

"You pervert!"

She suddenly charged at me, with the intention of beating me up.

Hey... You're way too unreasonable.

It's evening. We've finally tracked down the lost cat.

It was in...something like a gutter...or a stream...inside the park.

The meowing weak little kitten matched the features inside the notice, and it also had the same bell as in the photo. This should be the right one.

"OK. Good kitty..."

The kitten, which had somehow made its way into a trash can floating in the stream, used the last of its strength to howl, trying to scare me away. Hey now, I'm not your enemy, you know... I'm trying to save you.

I gingerly stretched my hand into the scraps of paper and empty cans, and grabbed the kitten, whose hair was standing on end.

"Good kitty, good kitty. Alright, you'll be OK now."

.....This smile...I haven't smiled for so long, it isn't too stiff, right?

Once it saw my face, the kitten yelped, and started struggling in my hand.

"Ah, Hey...oh, ku!"

Splash!

Holding the cat, I heavily fell into the shallow water by the stream.

Just in case, I had put aside my gun and cell phone before trying to get the cat. Looks like it was a piece of luck amidst my misfortune.

"...that's weird..."

Sitting on top of the block preventing water from overflowing, Aria, who was looking at me, let out a sigh.

The following day after finding the cat and receiving my 0.1 credits.

"Riko."

Riko, as per her note, was idling in the greenhouse by the girl's dormitory. The greenhouse I'm talking about is just a huge but simple plastic shed, and it's hardly used, so it's a good place to conduct secret meetings.

"Ki-kun!"

Hearing my voice, Riko, who was deep inside the roses, turned around.

Like Aria, she's a small but beautiful girl. She has sparkling eyelids and big bright eyes, and her silky hair is tied up with two ribbons. Two strands of hair extend from the sides of her head, and her soft, long hair went down her back.

"So you're still wearing your special uniform...What's this long white wavy thing?"

"This is the Butei High girls' uniform - White Wind Lolita version! Ki-kun, you should at least remember the different types of Lolita."

"Denied. I can't stand it, how many uniforms do you have?"

Hearing me say this, Riko dipped her head and began counting the types of uniforms she had on her fingers. Once I figured out what she was doing, I quickly fished out the games, which were bound extremely tightly in a paper bag, out of my backpack.



"Riko, I have it. You must keep this a secret from Aria, understand?"

"Un! I got it!"

Riko suddenly stood to attention, and adopted a stance with both hands by her head, as if she was saluting me.

With a pained face, I handed over the paper bag, and Riko ripped it open immediately. Also she started breathing heavily, in and out, 'Fufufufufufu', just like a wild animal.

"Uwaah--! It's 'White and Black!', 'Story of White Grass!' and 'Gothic Lolita Cosplay Imouto!'"

Riko started jumping around excitedly, while waving around the R15, which means it can only be bought by those 15 and up, Galge.

I think that everyone can tell from her clothes already, that Riko is an Otaku.

However, she's different from normal Otaku girls. She also has a strange obsession with Galge. She absolutely loves the heroines that wear the same frilly dresses as her.

Of course, Riko is already above 15, and she can buy these games herself. However, two days before, when she went to Academy Island's game store, the saleswoman refused to sell her the games, because she thought that, judging from her height, Riko was still a middle schooler.

So she contracted me to buy it for her.

Normally, I would rather die than buy these...things. Also, I've left an impression on the saleswoman that I will not ever be rid of. Despite all this, I am willing to do this for Riko, all for the sake of getting rid of Aria.

Why does Aria want me to be her slave?

The first step to getting her out of my house, is to understand this.

If there is really a solid reason, I will do all in my power to eradicate it.

So, if she's unwilling to tell me herself, I have no choice but to use other methods to investigate, and oppose her with my own power. After all, clashes between Butei are often won by the side with the most information.

"Ah...this, I don't want this. Riko hates these types of games."

Huh? The ones I picked should all fit Riko's descriptions, right?

Fuu. With her cheeks puffed out, Riko returned 'Gothic Lolita Cosplay Imouto! 2 & 3', the sequels to 'Gothic Lolita Cosplay Imouto!'.

"Why? Isn't this exactly the same as the other games?"

"Wrong. '2' and '3', the sequels, are always in contempt of the original game. They are a shame to all games! A name that all people hate!"

...really, what kind of messed up reasoning is that?

"Whatever...anyways, outside of these sequels, the rest are for you. In exchange, as promised, you have to tell me everything you know about Aria."

"--Alright!"

Riko is an idiot. She's a complete idiot. But, after I entered Inquesta, I began to understand. This idiot, exactly because of her idiocy, has a specialty. Not only is she an excellent cracker, but she's also a very proficient spy, eavesdropper, and hacker. Riko, who has an interest in these things, is abnormally good at gathering information. It could be said that she is an information thief of the current generation. Because of this, her Butei rank is A.

"Alright, then spit it out. I had to pretend to go to the bathroom, and then escape using my belt as a rope. It won't be long before Aria notices and catches me."

I looked around, and sat down on a railing that came up to my knee.

Riko seemed to think about something, stuck the games in her dress, and with a hop and a leap, she bounded over to where I was and sat down next to me. But since her feet couldn't reach the floor, she dangled there.

"Ahh--, Ki-kun, you're already groveling at the hem of Aria's skirt, huh? Since she's your girlfriend, why can't you just ask her about this kind of simple thing?"

"She isn't my girlfriend."

"Huh? I heard that you two are already a couple. Also some people are saying that they saw Kinji and Aria holding hands while walking out of the

boy's dormitory this morning. Aria's fanclub flew into a rage, and started running around the school shouting 'Kill Kinji!'. Even with that--"

"There's no need to use your finger to drill your head." (?)

Holding hands...Are they talking about what happened this morning?

I was just dragging Aria along, while she refused to let go of my hand.

"So, what base have you guys progressed to!?"

"There's no progression."

"Have you reached the H-scene?"

"Idiot! No way in hell!"

"Don't try to trick me! You guys are teenagers in the prime of life, after all!"

Riko, with a huge smile on her face, used her elbow to nudge my arm.

"...Everything I say, you have a way to twist it so it means something else entirely. You should go see a psychologist."

"Ki-"

"Alright, let's move on to the main topic. About Aria...Mmm, tell me about her evaluation in Assault."

"Alright-. Hmm...first, about her rank, she's S. And I'm able to count on one hand those that were able to reach S by their 2nd year."

But what Riko said didn't surprise me at all.

Because the maneuvers that Aria exhibited during the bike-jacking incident, can't be said to be anything like what a normal person could do.

"Although she's even smaller than Riko, her unarmed combat is very good too. Her style of fighting is... You know, that one with the mixed styles...that, Vale-Vale...baritsu...?"

"You mean **Valetudo**?"

"Right, right, that's her fighting style. In England it's called baritsu." (T/L: This is something that the author made up. It's relevant to the plot.)

I remember how Aria savagely kicked me out of the sports storage room.

That was really impressive. Even the me in Hysteria Mode could hardly defend myself.

"She's a prodigy in both marksmanship and swordsmanship. Also, she always uses her guns and swords in pairs, she's completely ambidextrous."

"I know that."

"Then, do you know her title?"

A title--those elite Butei that excel in the field will naturally acquire a title from others.

You mean the mere 16 year old Aria already has a title?

Riko, seeing my puzzled face, chuckled and said

"Aria the Quadra. Isn't it funny?"

"I don't understand how that's funny at all...whatever. I also want to know...right, I want to know about her movements as a Butei. What's her battle record?"

"Ah, this piece of news is impressive. Although it seems that she's taking a break right now, Aria's been working for the London Butei department and has been accepting commissions all around Europe ever since she was 14."

Riko looked up at me with those big eyes, and her voice grew more rigid as she said,

"...and in that time, she hasn't let a single target get away."

"Not even one?"

"Everyone that she's targeted has been captured without exception. A consecutive 99 times, and with only 1 raid each time."

"How...is that possible..."

Unbelievable.

Normally, Butei commissions dealing with capture are too difficult to be left to the normal police. It usually takes several raids for Butei to be able to force a target into submission, (In the Butei world, this process is called

Assault,) so they can successfully capture the target. But Aria managed to successfully capture 99 targets with just one raid each...

...So, I'm being targeted by such a monstrous girl.

"Ah-...is there anything else? What about her lineage?"

"Mmm--. Aria's father is half English."

"Ah, so she has mixed blood."

So that's why she has camellia eyes, as well as the Japanese double-fold eyelids.

And...That's why her name is [Kanzaki H. Aria] right?

"Oh yeah, her English lineage is a family whose middle name is [H]. And it seems to be extremely well known. I hear that her grandmother even holds the title 'Dame'?"

"It's a title bestowed by the English royal family. Those men favored by the royal family are named 'knights', while the women are given the title 'Dame'."

"Hey now. If what you say is true, doesn't that mean she's nobility?"

"That's right. She really is nobility. However, there seems to be some friction between Aria and the [H] family. So she doesn't like to give out the full name. Riko knows why...but that family, I don't really want to talk about it."

"Come on, tell me. I gave you all those games, right?"

"Riko hates to talk about people who allow their family names to give them higher status. Why don't you just use Google to look up some English websites?"

"My English sucks."

"Then work hard!"

Riko said it while swinging her hand with the intent of patting my back--

whoosh-.

But she missed me completely.

And with a smack, she hit my wrist-

"Ah?"

Crack.

-and slapped my watch to the ground.

... I reached out to pick it up, and saw that the clasp of the wristband was broken.

"Uwaah! I-I'm sorry!"

"It's OK, it was really cheap. I just bought it for 1980 yen at Odaiba."

"No way! I'll fix it for you! Riko will fix it for you properly! If I break my client's possessions, Riko's reputation will be stained!"

Riko snatched the watch from my hands, and stretched the neckline of her sailor uniform outwards. She then stashed my watch within her chest.

Hey...Hey now..., I quickly turned my head away.

Th-that sight is amazing.

"Kinji? Is there anything else?"

"...ah, not really, this should be it."

I'm not willing to go into Hysteria Mode in front of a girl, and if she notices that I was looking at her chest, there'll be trouble. So with those hurried words, I quickly made my way out of the greenhouse.

Gold, huh? In this world, bras sure come in a variety of colors.

I returned to my apartment, and stared out at the view outside the window. [Academy Island] had been stained a deep gold by the sunset.

This place that held Butei High, the dormitories, as well as shops for the students are on an artificial island. It was originally a piece of coastline of Tokyo Bay, but the plans for it failed, and it was sold off as a piece of land.

And the proof is, a little north of Rainbow Bridge, is an artificial island exactly like this one, except it's completely empty. Because of that, it's nicknamed [Empty Island].

On the south tip of that bare island, are the wind turbines that the developer built as a last resort. The blades of the turbine turned lazily. It was a really quiet scene; I don't hate these kinds of scenes at all.

From the LCD TV came the news report: 'Typhoon No. 1, which appeared in the Pacific, is maintaining its wind pressure while moving over Okinawa', but it only served to emphasize the silence that I loved so much.

Ahh, this place is really nice.

But of course, this excludes that girl lying in here.

"You're so slow."

Aria, sitting on the sofa, turned her head around to face me.

In her hand was a mirror, and it appears she was looking for split hairs, in an attempt to pass the time.

Aria was using a hairclip to keep her hair up, exposing her forehead.

Although the hairclip was quite childish, the slightly cute look really suited her.

That dainty forehead is her most attractive point, and I think she herself knew that.

"How did you get in?"

I myself thought that what I had said was really stupid, but I needed to maintain my appearance of protest.

"I'm a Butei, you know."

See? My question really was extremely stupid.

She must have made a copy of the keycard. After all, opening locks is the basics of the basics for Butei.

"Did you really wish to leave a lady standing outside? How impolite."

"I don't accept that unreasonable people like you have any right to be called lady, fivehead."

"Fivehead?"

"Those with wide foreheads are called 'fiveheads'."

"--You don't understand the attractiveness of my forehead! You've finally lost the right to be called a human!"

Exaggerated Aria, sticking her tongue out at me.

Aah. I get it. Actually, I really do get it.

You're very cute.

Judging by your appearance only.

"This forehead is my main attraction. It said so in a lot of hair magazines back in England."

Aria turned her back on me, and seemed to be happily examining her forehead in the mirror.

♪Hmm,Hmm-mm♪

She even started humming a song.

I converted my unhappiness into anger and dumped my backpack beside Aria. However, it seemed that Aria had gotten used to my rebellious behaviour, and continued to happily examine her forehead in the mirror.

"As expected of an ojou-sama of a noble family, you take a lot of pride in your appearance."

I strode into the bathroom, and threw a random insult at her.

However, against my expectations, Aria happily said,

"...you investigated me?"

"That's right. I even heard that you never let even one target escape."

"Ooh~~, you even found out about that? You're becoming more and more like a Butei. However,"

Aria said this, and leaned back, tapping one foot against the wall.

"--a while before, I let a target escape. That was the first time ever."

"Oh? So there was someone as amazing as that. Who was it?"

Wait a moment. Could it be that Riko left something out?

"It was you."

Pfft!

Water sprayed out of my mouth.

Me? Ah, she's talking about what happened after the bike-jacking!

"I-I'm not a criminal! Why am I on that list!?"

"You molested me! Are you going to pretend that never happened? You're a beast! A worm!"

So from a slave, I became a beast. And now a worm? My standing with her really did plummet.

"I told you, that was unavoidable! And I didn't even do anything to you!"

"Stop talking rubbish! Anyway!"

Aria blushed and pointed her finger straight at me.

"You might be capable of being my slave! Come back to Assault, and let me see the power that allowed you to escape from me!"

"Tha-that...I was just lucky that I managed to escape. I'm an E rank, a useless guy. I'm sorry to disappoint you. So get out of here."

"Don't think you can trick me! You were ranked S at the entrance exam!"

--Ku.

So she's going to use that?

So, it appears that Butei still put their faith in records. She's got me cornered, it'll be hard to argue with her.

"That proves that it wasn't a coincidence that you were able to escape from me! My intuition is never wrong!"

"N-no matter what you say...I can't do it right now! So get out!"

"Right now? Is there a trigger? Tell me. I'll help you."

How could I--say it!!!

My face reddened.

She wants to help me?

Of course, she's only saying this because she doesn't know the conditions necessary for me to enter Hysteria Mode--But those words are like explosives! Because my trigger for entering Hysteria Mode is, 'You have to turn me on!'.

"Come on, spit it out! In exchange for being my slave, I'll help you!"

"...!"

--Inadvertently,

My brain went through several scenarios of Aria [helping out].

Now that I think about it, Aria and I are alone in this apartment.

Without me noticing, the sun had sunk down below the horizon, and none of the lights were turned on, leaving the room dark.

Arrghh. Stop it. Kinji, stop fantasizing!

"I'll do anything! Tell me...please tell me! Kinji...!"

Aria approached me. That womanly Gardenia scent once again teased my senses.

I--

"Ku..."

This isn't good.

Because my fantasies have already put me on the verge of going into Hysteria Mode.

This could be said to be...the power of her eyes, right?

I thought that Aria's luscious camellia eyes were so beautiful, so lovable--

That feeling...flared out from my body. I couldn't resist the feeling of my blood pumping through my veins, assaulting my senses.

--I can't.

I can't change.

I don't want to...go into that mode!

Thud!

I, unable to think, pushed Aria away.

Aria, screamed 'Kyaa!' in a voice worthy of a Seiyuu, and fell down on the sofa.

Fuu. Her short skirt fluttered up, and I quickly turned my head away.

Things have reached this stage, I have to...

surrender to Aria.

"...Only once."

"Once?"

But, by no means will this be an unconditional surrender.

There will be conditions.

"Assault--I'll go back. However, I'll only join you on one mission. The first mission from when I return, that one case, I will solve it with you. This is my condition."

"..."

"I will not budge. Also, I will take Assault as an elective. That should be fine."

I turned back to Aria, who had fixed her skirt.., seeing that beautiful forehead directed at me, it seems as if she's pondering something.

In Butei High, students can choose an extra course at their leisure.

This is called an elective. Although the marks you earn in the elective will not be reflected on your total credits, but to be able to be a [Butei], one needs to have a variety of skills. A lot of students will move between classes, in an attempt to improve themselves.

Aria, as an elite Butei, wants a slave for herself...more like an assistant. And that desire is extremely strong.

And, she has met me, who managed to escape from her under Hysteria Mode.

She then thought 'He should have the skills to be my slave'.

But, there's one thing she doesn't know about me.

Which is, Hysteria Mode.

Before this is exposed to her, I have to let Aria see my skills in normal mode.

This way, she will probably lose faith in me and leave, right?

"...alright. Then I'll move out."

...Unexpectedly, my surrender has caused this nuisance to move out.

"I don't have much time left, either. So for this one mission, you have to show your full power."

"...Don't mind these small things, it's just one mission."

"OK. But bear in mind that, no matter how colossal the mission is, it only counts for one."

"I understand."

"However, if you dare slack off, I will be sure to make holes in you."

"Alright. I promise you. I will do everything I can."

However, that's everything I can do...in my normal mode.

3rd Ammo: Assault

I never thought I would come back.

Assault - a popular name for it is 'the subject with no tomorrow'.

This subject's survival rate upon graduation is 97.1%.

In other words, a little less than 3 of every 100 people would not survive until graduation. They died either during the execution of their missions or during their practice. Really...

That was Assault, and that was also the dark side of a Butei's work. However, I was here primarily to check my equipment, and apply to freely take a class and so forth; my time, excluding training, was almost used up.

Nonetheless, until I settled one case; I wanted some sort of gun practice, but it wasn't going to happen today. It was because Assault always assembled and mobilized parties, so its pupils naturally became friendly ... "Oh Kinjii, I believed that you would definitely return. Now, please die even a second earlier here!"

"You still haven't died, Natsumi. You will surely die a tenth of a second earlier than me"

"Kinjii! You finally came back to die! An idiot like you would die immediately! The thing about Butei is that idiots are the ones that are going to die."

"Well, why are you still alive, Mikami?"

When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

The die-die saying was this place's greeting; if I returned die-die one by one, as they were delighted by my return and said die-die, that itself would eat up a considerable amount of time.

As I came out of Assault, which somehow parried an obtained gunpowder stink,

Within the sunset, there was a small child waiting for me around the back of the gate.

Needless to say, it was Aria.

Aria recognized my figure and came trotting along.

Then as I began to walk in displeasure, she began walking by my side.

"... You are pretty popular, huh. I was a little surprised"

"I don't want to be liked by such people"

Those were my true feelings.

"Your social disposition is poor and I also feel that you are a little gloomy. However, I feel that everyone here... how do I put it... looks up to you."

...That was certainly because they remembered the time during the entrance examination.

It was me in hysteria mode.

The examination inflicted on us, the applicants of Assault, was ... scattering us in a 14 story deserted building, and after arming ourselves, we were to arrest exam candidates other than ourselves in groups. It was an actual combat format.

I quickly brought down or caught all the exam candidates by myself, with traps, and without warning, even the 5 instructors hiding in the mansion.

...Damn it.

I recalled things that I did not want to remember.

Sensing that I became further upset, Aria dropped her glance to the ground while walking at my side.

"Hey, Kinji."

"What's up?"

"Thank you."

"What's this now?"

I replied to Aria in an irritated voice, who although she spoke in a low voice, seemed truly happy.

Well, you seemed happy.

Literally, it was because she had obtained a slave who would fight for her sake.

"Don't be mistaken. I only came back here because I didn't have a choice. Once I settle one case, I'll immediately return to Inquesta."

"I understand, but..."

"What?"

"Kinji, when you walked into Assault and were surrounded by everyone, you looked really cool."

"..."

Why did she say such a thing.

While she probably did not mean it that way, having a cute girl say something like that to me left me speechless.

"No one here approaches me because the differences between our abilities is too great. No one can match up ... well, even so it is fine, because I'm Aria."

"Aria?"

I tilted my head to Aria, who called out her name in an intonation different from the usual.

"Aria also means a solo vocal piece of an opera. It is the part where one person sings. Solitude... It seems that I am always alone no matter where I am, whether it be in Butei High or Rome."

"So, is it your intention to make me a slave and change it into a duet?"

After I said that without looking in her direction, she laughed.

Upon glancing to the side, she was laughing as if I had just made a funny joke.

"So you can be funny, after all."

"It wasn't a joke."

"Wasn't it?"

"I don't get what you are trying to say."

"As I thought, Kinji. Since you've returned here, you've gotten a little more lively. Up until yesterday, you looked like you were deceiving yourself somehow. You looked hurt. Now you look charming."

"No... I'm not."

Aria again said an embarrassing thing.

I did not want to listen to Aria.

Somehow, there was an aura of truth to what she said -

"I'm going to visit the gamcen. You go home alone. From today on, you're going back to the female dormitory. There's no point in returning together."

"Let's stay together 'til the bus stop."

As usual her abusive language struck and she seemed truly happy that she brought me back to Assault. I understood her facial expression; she was easy to understand. She wouldn't be suited for Inquesta.

"Hey, what's gamcen?"

"It is an abbreviation for game center. Don't you even know such a thing?"

"I'm a child who just returned to the country, so it can't be helped. Eh. Well then, I'll go too. Today, I'll 'specially play together with you. It's a reward."

"I don't need it. Such a thing isn't a reward, it's a punishment game."

I walked at a slightly faster pace and started to separate from Aria.
Tekutekuteku (trudgingly).

After that, Aria laughed 'Nyaa' and walked at the same speed right beside me. Tekutekuteku (trudgingly).

"Stop following me! I don't want to see you!"

"I don't want to see your idiotic face either!"

"So don't come after me!"

"Like I'll listen to you!"

Tatatatatatatata.....

We finally ran side by side to the game center.

Her feet were abnormally quick.

"Haa. Haa. Haa. What's this..."

Aria said, standing by my side, with her pigtail touching me.

Her red eyes were looking at the crane game in front of the shop.

"Haa...Haa. Ah, this is used to catch stuffed animals."

"A machine to catch stuffed animals? What a naïve name. Well, anyways, this is a place you wanted to go to, so the games here surely aren't of my level."

Aria was watching the machines with disdain.

In the middle of the glass, the piled up animals make me wonder if it's a stuffed animal of a leopard or a lion.

"...Ah...!"

Bang!

Aria immediately sticks to the glass.

That little body of hers glued to the glass makes her look like an elementary school girl.

If I let her walk through the game room like this, she will probably be questioned by a policeman.

"What is it? Have you never seen one before?"

"..."

"Are you OK?"

"....."

"Are you hungry?"

".....So cute....."

What.

Aria saying something delicate like that, makes me feel a little bit weak.

Even though the puppets are cute...It isn't something that, the one as strong as spirits, the butei who needs to kill, 'Quadra-Aria', would say?

Hey, did you play the wrong role? I was thinking about teasing her, but her mouth already became triangular-shaped, and she was almost drooling. Don't be like this. How can you meet someone as you are right now?

"Do you want to try?"

"I don't know how to play."

"Even kindergarten kids can play this."

"They can learn immediately?"

"Of course. Do you want me to teach you how?"

When Aria heard this, she could not help shaking her head.

What's happening to her? Isn't it too abnormal?

It turned out that there wasn't much to teach. After Aria heard the order of the vertical and horizontal buttons, she took out a 100-yen coin from her purse.

She adjusts her posture in front of the machine, and delicately operates her claw, just like a sniper.

Bzzzzz.....

Poof.

But she aims badly. Only a little bit of the leopard or the lion's leg was grabbed, so she couldn't pick it up.

"I.....I was only practicing. I understand how to play this now."

"Even an idiot who plays one time would understand."

"Here I go again!"

Aria says this while taking another 100-yen coin from her purse. She puts it in the machine and strongly presses on the control button.

But, Poof.

This time she only lifted up a little bit of the bottom, by the tail.

"By the way, let me say that if you put 500 yen, you can play six times."

"Don't bother me! I'll definitely get it the next time! Now, I know the secret of success!"

Actually, isn't that what someone who doesn't know the secret of success would say?

Poof.

As expected, the doll was only lifted a little bit.

"Ah--Aaah!"

"Don't break it."

"This time I understand it all! I'm getting serious!"

Klang. Poof. Klang. Poof.

Aria, who still doesn't give up, puts a 1000-yen bill into the changing machine.

"This time I'm really serious. I'm really really really serious!"

She doesn't have a chance. I need to find a way.

But I didn't think that she would really have the skills of a primary school student, as she appears to.

And that she's like the people who get addicted to gambling.

"Step aside."

When Aria had wasted around 3000 yen, I couldn't stand seeing her do it anymore and helplessly took out my wallet.

But since this prideful noble wouldn't let go of the control buttons, I had to push her aside.

Let me see.

Hmm.

My target will be the one next to the hole.

The target was a deep pile of stuffed cats. The animals are the same, so she would be happy no matter which one I picked.

Shaa.

I skillfully caught one inside the pile.

".....!"

Gulp. I heard Aria swallow her saliva.

"Huh?"

I looked at it carefully. The tail of the stuffed animal I had picked up had dragged another one along with it.

"Kinji, look! You got two!"

I can see that without you pointing it out.

"Kinji, if you drop one, I won't forgive you!"

"Don't make these kinds of sarcastic comments..."

"Ah...ah, go in, go in, go in!"

Although I wasn't as enthusiastic as Aria, I was a little excited myself.

I can definitely get one of them, but...the other...can I get the other, too?

The other...what will happen?

The claw...

Opened...!

Hum.

Clank.

One of them dropped in the hole, and the other one, pulled along by the first one's tail--dropped inside too.

"We did it!"

"Alright!"

I was really happy.

So, without thinking--

I really wasn't thinking.

♪Slap♪

I stretched out my hands and gave Aria, who was smiling happily as well, a high five.

"Ah." "Ah."

We said simultaneously, staring at each other with widened eyes.

And afterward, we both hurriedly looked aside with a 'Hmph'.

Damn it.

I'm getting angry at myself.

Why am I being so familiar with someone like that?

And Aria--

said "Th-this is pretty good for an idiot like Kinji!", while hurriedly reaching into the machine to retrieve the two stuffed animals.

I glanced at it, and saw that the tags had 'Leopon (Lion-Leopard fusion)' on it. What on Earth is that?

"So-cu-ute!"

Aria, not trying to hide her emotions anymore, hugged the stuffed animal to herself. She hugged it so hard, the Leopon was about to explode.

...with this kind of behavior, she's exactly like a [normal] girl...

And I, how do I say this...couldn't believe my eyes.

Aria, could it be, that she might, actually... be a normal girl?

She's the exact opposite of the Aria before...

And I suddenly thought of something. The Aria I've seen up till now, the one that's been harassing me all this time...was she forcing herself to do that?

Her behavior right now...there's no reason for her to have to act like this.

"Kinji."

I came back to Earth...and saw Aria offering me one of the two Leopons.

"This is for you. It's the reward for your efforts."

Smiling while closing her eyes, Aria really surprised me.

So she can also make this kind of expression?

Aaahh, damn it.

She's really cute.

"Huh, mm."

I took the Leopon, and I noticed that there was a string on it that could be used as a phone strap.

Now that I think about it, my cellphone doesn't have any decorations.

I'll stick it on then.

I fished out my cellphone, and started trying to poke the string through the holes near the top.

Aria, seeing my actions, also fished out her own pearly pink cellphone, and like me, started tying her own Leopon to the cellphone. What a coincidence, her Leopon has a strap too.

The string extending out of the lion's butt was very crude, and I hadn't managed to get it through just yet.

And anyways, to the developer: Why on Earth did you put the string there?

"Kinji, the first person that ties the Leopon to their phone wins."

"Are you kidding? Are you still a kid?"

"Alright, it's going in."

"Me too...it's in, how could I lose to you?"

Now that I think about it, this is the first time a girl ever gave me anything.

Although Shirayuki's given me a lot of presents in the past, she's more like a childhood friend, so it doesn't count.

So like that, just for the sake of competing over who could tie the Leopon to their cellphone first, we struggled so hard.

My tolerance level really is low.

The disappearance of the intruder returned my room to its usual calm.

In the morning, in the bedroom that held only one person, my cell phone's alarm woke me up.

I reached out for my phone in a haze, but I only managed to grab on to the Leopon attached to it.

"..."

I stared straight at the Leopon for a while...before I slowly got up to prepare for school.

I ate the lunch from yesterday, and raised my wrist so I could take a look at the watch that Riko gave back to me.

"?"

I still have quite a bit of time.

I thought that I had burnt through quite a lot...

Then I'll have some tea.

This is weird.

I left my house slightly earlier than normal.

But in the midst of the rain, the 7:58 bus had already reached the bus stop, and the students were already scrambling to get on.

Because this bus arrives at the school district slightly before first period, it's always crowded.

If I let down my guard, the bus could already be full.

"Hey! I'm coming! Ah great, I made it!" "Hey, Kinji, morning!"

I charged towards the bus, but saw Muto from Logi calling at me from the steps of the bus.

The inside was already packed full of students.

This is bad.

Because it's raining today, all those people that normally ride bikes are taking the bus instead.

"Muto! Pull me on!"

"I want to help you, but I can't! It's already full! Take your bike!"

I waved my hands, trying to signal to Muto to push inside, but I noticed that he was on the verge of being pushed off of the bus himself.

"My bicycle is broken. If I don't make the bus, I'll definitely be late!"

"Sorry, no can do! Kinji, is school really the highest priority for a boy? Just skip first period! Then, see you second period!"

He...said 'see you second period!' Are you really an idiot!?

In the wake of that backstabber Muto's voice, the bus doors closed, emotionless.

The sounds of conversation and laughter from within made me grit my teeth in anger.

Damn it. If it's raining this heavily, how am I supposed to walk to school? Also, I'll definitely be late.

I walked on the street alone, in the midst of the downpour.

The road on Academy Island was perfectly straight, allowing me a view of my destination.

After all, the reason that this artificial island was made in the first place, was to provide a cheap runway.

So, it's not surprising that this school is so damned long.

If it were just that, I'd already be unhappy. However, it's raining too. This raised my unhappiness level by about 1000%.

I should just do what Muto said, skip first period and be done with it.

No way, I can't. The first period is Japanese lessons, a normal class. The normal classes are very important for me, who wishes to switch to a normal high school. I can't skip it.

While I was thinking that and passing by the Assault section's sporthall...my cellphone started ringing.

"Hello."

I pulled out my cellphone by the Leupon, and put it by my ear--

"Kinji. Where are you?"

It's Aria.

What is it? It's 8:20 right now. Why is she calling me during class?

"Mmm, I'm next to the Assault building."

"Good. Outfit yourself with Class C Armaments and make your way to the girl's dormitory. Now."

"Why? Assault classes only start from 5th period."

Aria, hearing my complaints, started shouting

"This isn't a class, this is a mission! If I tell you to come now, then you better get the hell over here!"

I looked at myself unhappily.

A TNK bullet proof vest. A specially reinforced helmet with mask. A wireless headset with the Butei High emblem, as well as tactical gloves. Crisscrossing my body were leather straps, with holsters, and pockets for spare magazines.

This is exactly like Class C Armament worn by the SWAT or SAT, and it's the assault gear that Butei use for [outings].

The cases that Assault decides to step in on are usually extremely dangerous. So participants are ordered to equip Class C Armament.

--This mission.

What's happening?

What on Earth is happening?

I hope it's a small case.

I was inside the private institution, where the sounds of firing and weapons reverberated. With that prayer in mind, I approached the roof.

Aria was wearing Class C Armament, like me, and standing on the roof in the midst of the rain.

So Aria. You're just an exchange student, yet you are still so excited.

Reki was someone who like me, was ranked at S during the entrance exam. And so far, she's an expert sniper who has kept that ranking.

Her slender body was taller than Aria by about half a head. She's a very beautiful short-haired girl, but because of her emotionless expression, so reminiscent of a robot, she hasn't received much attention.

And, nobody knows her real name. Even her.

"Reki."

I greeted her, even though she was standing as still as a statue. She didn't reply.

This isn't surprising either, because Reki always wears extremely large headphones, listening to something.

Last year, I worked with her a lot in Assault...but it appears she hasn't changed this bad habit.

Tap Tap, I used my fingers to tap her head. Reki finally took off her headphones and turned to face me. She still has such a lovely face, just like a game CG.

"Were you also recruited by Aria?"

"Yes."

Reki answered in a toneless voice.

"Anyways, what kind of music do you listen to with these headphones you're always wearing?"

"Not music."

"Then what is it?"

"The sound of wind."

After Reki said that lazily, with a click she lightly put her sniper rifle--I think it's a Dragunov Semi-Automatic--on her back, just like a tennis racket.

"It's time."

With that said, Aria turned to face us.

"We planned to find another S rank Butei. But it seems as if they have all left on other business."

It seems that in Aria's eyes, I have a higher ranking than I actually do.

"So, it's up to this 3-man team to enter pursuit. I will make up for our lack of firepower."

"Pursuit? What are we pursuing? What happened? You should explain the situation, at least."

"A bus has been hijacked."

"A bus?"

"The Butei High bus. The one that stops at your place at 7:58."

--!?

What did you say!?

That bus was hijacked?

That's the bus that Muto and the other students are packed into like canned food.

"Is the hijacker inside the vehicle?"

"His location is unknown, but I do not believe he is inside the vehicle. Because there's a bomb on that bus."

--a bomb--

Hearing those words, my brain automatically recalled that incident from a few days back, where my own bike was hijacked.

Aria, who may or may not be thinking of the same thing, turned to look at me.

"Kinji. This is the work of the 'Butei Killer'. The same offender who blew up your bicycle."

Did you say...'Butei Killer'?

This familiar name raised my hair on end.

That's the name of the person Shirayuki mentioned, the one who carried out those continuous killings.

"The first incident was hijacking a Butei's motorcycle. Afterward, it was a car. After that, it was your bicycle, and this time, it's a bus...each time, the offender has set the bomb's trigger as 'If you slow down, the bomb will explode', in order to take away the victim's freedom of movement. And afterward, he remotely detonates the bomb. However, the electronic signal from the detonation is fixed. The electronic signal is the same this time as from when I saved you."

"But, hasn't the 'Butei Killer' been apprehended already?"

"The person we caught wasn't the real offender."

"What did you say? Wait a second. What is that supposed to mean?"

This is weird.

This is so strange, it can't be.

But--

Aria looked at me strictly.

"There is no time to explain, and this is not necessary information. The leader of this squadron will be me."

Aria said, straightening her chest.

Standing to the side like a statue, Reki glanced at Aria.

"Wait...Aria, wait a moment! You--"

"This incident has already occurred! The hijacked bus could explode at any time! Our mission is to save everybody inside! Also!"

"I'm fine with you being the leader! But you have to explain the situation to your teammates! It doesn't matter what incident it is, Butei are always fighting for their lives!"

"Butei Law article section 1! 「Believe in your comrades and help each other」! Right now the victims are our fellow Butei! There's no need to clarify any more than that!"

A deafening sound, loud enough to overshadow the sound of the rain, appeared.

That's the sound of a helicopter.

I looked up, and saw the light blue rotating lights of the Logi helicopter preparing to descend to the roof of the girl's dormitory.

I didn't think that Aria...would be able to get her hands on one of these on such short notice.

If our transport is here already, then there really is no time to explain.

"...Damn it. Aahh, I'll do it! It'll be fine if I do it, right!"

Aria, hearing my cry, swept aside her wet hair, completely mussed from the wind pressure of the helicopter, and--smiled.

"Kinji. This is the first mission, the one in our promise."

"So it's something big like this. I'm really disappointed."

"You're going to keep your promise, right? I have high expectations of your abilities."

"I'm warning you, I don't have those abilities that you think I have. Also, I've had a very long holiday. Bringing an E Butei like me on an S level mission like this, are you really fine with it?"

"If we run into danger, I'll protect you. Don't worry."

According to the news that Connect sent us through the wireless headset, the Butei High bus follows the Isuzu ERGA-Mio specifications. Ever since Muto boarded the bus in front of the boy's dormitory, the vehicle hadn't stopped at any bus stops, and had entered an uncontrollable state. Following this, Connect received an urgent report from the students inside the bus which said that the bus had been hijacked.

The bus, exceeding the passenger limit with 60 people on board, circled around Academy Island once, before going through the Omi South bridge, and entering Odaiba.

"Have the police or the Eastern Butei Section taken action?"

In the howling of the helicopter, I was speaking to Aria through the headset.

"They have already taken action. However, the target is a moving bus. They require some time to get ready."

"So, looks like we're the first to take action."

"Of course. Once I received that electronic signal, I took action even before the news got around."

With a 'Hmmp', Aria examined her beloved pistols.

Although the color of those silver and black guns differ, the model is the same.

The base specifications should be that of the Colt M1911. All the patents on that gun have expired, so it's free to be modified.

The most interesting thing on the guns were the pink seashell engravings on the handle. The engravings were of a beautiful face that, no matter how I look at it, looked almost exactly like Aria.

"I see it."

The sound of Reki's voice spurred Aria and I to stick our heads outside the bullet proof glass, looking down.

Through the window on the right, we could see the buildings of Odaiba, the Bay Road, as well as the coastal high-speed railway.

But at this distance, the vehicles were too small, I couldn't see them at all.

"I don't see anything, Reki."

"In front of the Japan Airlines hotel is a bus, turning right. Inside it, I can see some Butei High students."

"Yo-you can really see it clearly... What's your eyesight?"

"Around 6.0."

Calmly saying this amazing number, Reki surprised us both so much that we turned to look at each other.

The helicopter pilot followed Reki's directions, and descended. Now I could really see the Butei High bus over there, speeding. It's going way too fast.

The bus continued to overtake the other vehicles, going towards the TV station. Once the people in the TV station noticed that there was a helicopter chasing the bus, they quickly got out their cameras and cell phones to start recording the scene.

"Descend till you're above the bus. I'll take care of examining the exterior of the bus. Kinji will confirm the situation inside, and report. Reki will stay in the helicopter, and await further orders."

Aria smoothly gave us our orders and grabbed two Assault issue parachutes; they looked exactly like backpacks.

"The interior... If the offender is really inside, I'll be in a lot of danger."

"The 'Butei Killer' won't be inside."

"This hasn't been confirmed as the 'Butei Killer's' work yet!"

"If it isn't, then find a way to take care of it yourself. You should be able to solve it by yourself."

--You...

Butei are constantly criticized for this, but for the sake of completing the mission quickly and effectively, they have to adapt to match the situation.

However--Aria's decision was completely without foresight. One might also say completely devoid of common sense, too.

Which is to say, she always charges towards the site, and then relies on her overwhelming skill to take care of matters in a heartbeat. You, for me...you put too much faith in your teammates, you know.

--I'm beginning to understand why no matter where Aria goes, she is known as the [Aria].

Aria and I deployed our Assault issue parachutes, while relying on our own weight to pull us down to the roof of the bus.

I, who hadn't done any aerial assaults for a while, slipped off the bus.

Smack.

Aria clasped my wrist, and pulled me back up.

"Hey, take this seriously!"

Shouted Aria, unhappily

"I am taking this seriously...but, right 'now'..."

I muttered, while engaging the cable on my harness to the roof of the bus, giving myself more traction.

Aria who also engaged her cable, quickly jumped off the back of the bus with a practiced movement.

To ascertain that the offender was not inside the bus, I used the mirror mounted on my telescopic rod to confirm the situation. Only students were inside, I didn't see anybody suspicious who might be the offender.

I let the students inside the bus open the window, then cut the cable and went in.

The students, who were already in a state of panic, started rushing to me and screaming upon seeing me enter.

But because they were far too raucous, I was unable to understand what they were saying.

"Kinji!"

I turned towards a familiar voice. The person that spoke was also the person who said 'I'll see you 2nd period!' and left me in the rain, Muto.

"Muto--it's not second period yet, but we meet again."

"Ah, that's right. Ku...! Why did I get on this bus?"

"This is karma for leaving a friend behind."

"--Kinji, go talk to that girl."

The person that Muto was pointing to was a girl with glasses, standing by the driver's seat.

"To-to-to-to-Tohyama-senpai! Save me!"

This child in tears, pleading for me to rescue her, was a Middle schooler in Butei High.

"What happened?"

"M-m-my cellphone was modified at some point in time. A-and it said,"

"If you slow down, you blow up."

So it really is that way.

It's as Aria said, the offender is the same.

The same person who hijacked my bicycle!

"Kinji, what's the situation? Report!"

Aria's voice crackled over the headset.

"It's as you said, the perpetrator is controlling this bus from an external source. What about on your side?"

"--There's something like a bomb over here!"

I quickly ran over to the back of the bus, but all I could see was Aria's feet and the cable.

She's probably upside down, checking on the situation underneath the car.

"It's a Kaczynski β Module plastic explosive, the type of explosive the 'Butei Killer' uses. Just from the appearance, it seems the bomb contains around 3500 Ccs of explosives!"

I was stunned.

What is this! That explosive content is way over the top!

If that exploded, an entire train would be torn apart, let alone a bus!

"I'm going over to try and pry it off--Ah!"

At the same moment as Aria's shout, the whole bus rattled heavily.

The students were all pressed against the floor, each one moaning and crying.

I looked at the back window in panic--

The convertible that bumped into the bus braked with a screech, and retreated, putting some space between the bus and it.

"Aria! Are you OK!"

--No answer.

It looks like the collision injured her.

I stuck my upper body out the window, intending to climb onto the roof so I could get to the back.

VROOOMMM! The sound of acceleration led me to turn my head, and I saw the car that bumped into the bus just now - A completely red Renault suporu spider -- quickly sped to the side of the bus.

And the Uzi that was set up in the empty driver's seat, was aimed this way!

"Everybody get down!"

The students, hearing my cry, immediately hit the floor--DADADADADADADA!

A barrage of bullets peppered the windows of the bus, shattering them from the back to the front.

"Uwahh!"

I, who had taken a bullet in the chest, was thrown back into the bus.

I wasn't hurt thanks to the bulletproof vest...however, I still received the full impact. It was like a knee slamming into my chest. I will never be able to get used to that.

Screech.

The chassis of the bus suddenly wobbled dangerously, I made my way to the driver hurriedly--

"!"

The driver had collapsed on the wheel.

His shoulder had been hit.

He was hit because he had to continue steering the bus.

The bus started to tilt left and right, dangerously.

To avoid oncoming traffic, the bus was scraping against the guardrail of the road, leaving a trail of sparks.

--Everything is fucked up...!

What do I do?

I don't know. I don't know. The me right now, has no way of solving the situation before me--!

"Turn right at the junction with Ariake Colosseum."

From the cellphone that the girl lying on the ground had dropped, came a synthesized voice.

More importantly, the bus is beginning to slow down!

"Mu-Muto! Come and drive this! You mustn't slow down!"

I took off my bulletproof vest and handed it to Muto, and put my hand on the window again, calling out.

"Le-leave it to me!"

After Muto put on the bulletproof vest, he, with the help of the other students, moved the driver to one side, and he sat on the driver's seat.

"This bus has probably broken every traffic law in existence. Have fun, Muto. You'll definitely get your license revoked."

"I hope you fall off the bus! I'll run you over!"

Speeding through the rainstorm, the bus charged onto Rainbow Bridge.

"--Are you trying to bring the bomb downtown--!"

I carefully sat on the window, making sure I wasn't thrown off.

The bus swerved to make the entrance of the bridge, and it tilted dangerously for a moment, but in the end, it stabilized.

This was thanks to Muto, who ordered all the students to the left side of the bus, preventing the vehicle from flipping over.

As expected of Muto. The only thing he excels in is his duty in Logi.

The bus sped onto Rainbow Bridge--there were no cars in sight.

It appears that the police have already locked down the area.

"Hey Aria, are you alright!?"

"Kinji!"

Aria, climbing on her cable, looked up at me, who was standing on the roof.

"Aria! Where's your helmet!?"

"It was knocked off when the convertible collided with us! What about yours!?"

said Aria, pointing at my own head.

"The driver was injured--so, I lent my helmet to Muto so he could continue to drive."

"It's too dangerous! Why did you come out here without proper equipment!? Why can't you make even these simple decisions! Get back in the bus, now--watch out! Get down here! What are you doing, you idiot!?"

Aria suddenly drew her guns, and charged at me with a pale face.

--what happened?

Not knowing the situation, I turned around--

and saw the convertible, now in front of the bus, firing its Uzi.

Aiming at my head.

It fired.

A bullet.

--I'm finished.

I really thought I was done.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Aria returning fire, and as if in slow motion, she used her small body to knock me out of the way.

Pft Pft!!

I heard the sound of two bullets meeting flesh.

Fresh blood sprayed through the air.

But, it didn't hurt at all.

"Aria!"

Rumble Rumble, Aria was rolling off the bus.

The blood trail she left was washed away by the rain.

"Aria--Aria!!"

I exerted all I had to hold on to the cable keeping Aria on the bus.

The convertible in front of the bus had slowed down, and was now at the side.

This isn't good, if it fires, we're dead--!

I thought...but, the Uzi didn't fire.

I turned my head to look, and saw that the Uzi mounted on the seat was destroyed.

It was damaged during the momentary exchange with Aria just now.

"If we run into danger, I'll protect you."

That voice, worthy of a Seiyuu, continuously echoed in my head.

"ARIA--!!"

I screamed, and used all of my strength to pull the unconscious Aria to the roof.

Her appearance stopped my heart cold. At that moment--

Bang!

The sound of an explosion rang out.

Bang! Followed by another one.

"!?"

After the noise, the convertible suddenly lost control, and it furiously collided with rail--Bang!

It exploded behind us.



I saw the Butei High helicopter, all the while keeping pace with us over Rainbow Bridge.

Inside the cabin of the helicopter, Reki was kneeling and her sniper rifle was directed this way.

In Odaiba, which was full of buildings, it was nigh impossible to find an opportunity to snipe, however, we had reached the bridge and Reki had an opening.

"---I am a single bullet."

I heard Reki's voice from my headset.

"It has no heart. Therefore, it does not think---"

She said, almost as if reciting a litany.

"---It just flies straight towards its target."

This...was something I heard many times while in Assault.

Something that Reki always said, when she fired.

When those incantation-sounding words were over--

Reki's muzzle flashed with a *Pa Pa Pa*

With each flash, I could feel the bullets pounding into the chassis of the bus with a *Dong Dong Dong*, and I could hear the sound of gunshots after the vibrations.

Clink, Clank. Something attached to the bottom of the bus had fallen off, and was rolling around on the road we had just traversed.

That object was the bomb, which had been detached from the bus.

"---I am a single bullet---"

Following Reki's litany, came another gunshot. Dong!

The object burst into sparks, and flew up, exactly like a football.

It flew towards the guardrail of the bridge, and from there, it dropped into the ocean.

--KABOOOOOM!!!!

The bomb, having been remotely detonated, sent up a huge pillar of water.

Following this, the bus started slowing down...until it reached a stop.

On the roof, was the unconscious Aria...

and I, who had merely stood by and let others do the work. The raindrops pounded my body, in the midst of the storm.

Aria was sent to the Butei Hospital, and her wounds were...very light.

But only because she was very lucky.

The two bullets that hit Aria had glanced off her forehead without causing any major injuries.

Aria, who had a concussion, was sent to receive a MRI. However, there were no signs of any internal bleeding. She only had external injuries.

The second day, after I handed in my report to Inquesta, I went to the Butei Hospital--and noticed that Aria was staying in a VIP single patient room. Now that I think about it, Riko did say that Aria was nobility.

Her room had a small antechamber, with some white lilies. Looking closer, I saw that there was a card with 'From Reki' stuck inside the flowers. You mean that robot-like girl, Reki, actually sent something like this?

I was astounded.

...*drip*...*drip*

"?"

From inside the room and through the door, which was slightly ajar, came a strange noise.

Thinking it was strange, I surreptitiously peeked through the keyhole. Aria was sitting on her bed and...

looking at the wound on her forehead with a mirror.

"..."

And because she was extremely focused, she didn't notice me, standing on the other side of the door.

The swelling of the wound on her forehead hadn't gone down yet, and there was still a small red bump.

The two bullets had left a scar on Aria's forehead, reminiscent of a cross. The beautiful forehead that she was so proud of, had lost its splendor.

Yesterday I had asked the doctor...and he had said, that wound would definitely leave a scar.

--it would leave a scar that would never fade. A permanent scar.

...*drip*...*drip*.

Aria, her eyes brimming with tears, was wearing the hair clip she normally wore. And her tears continued to drip, and drip, and drip.

Seeing this scene, my heart felt as if it had been pierced with a thousand needles.

Aria...adored her own forehead.

And now, that place has an irremovable scar. She has to be devastated.

"...Aria."

I pretended that I had just arrived, and took a step back while knocking on the door.

"Ah, wa-wait a moment."

From the room came the noise of her hurriedly putting her things away.

"...Go ahead."

I did as she said, and walked in. I saw that she had already replaced the bandages around her head, and was using various tools to fiddle with her gun.

The scene appeared somewhat artificial, but I knew that she was pretending to be maintaining her gun.

"--You've come to visit?"

She directed an impatient glare at me, not even bothering to hide her irritation.

"Don't think that I'm a patient. Staying in the hospital because of a little wound like this, the doctors are overreacting."

"Obviously you're a patient. The wound on your forehead--"

"What about it? Why're you staring at it?"

"Ah, well...it will leave a scar, right?"

"And? I don't care. There's no need to feel sorry for something like that. Mmm, I'm done with maintenance."

clatter Aria placed her guns on the drawer by her bed, and folded her arms.

"Butei Law article section 1. 「Believe in your comrades and help each other」. I was merely fulfilling this one point. I didn't do it especially for you."

"Butei Law article sect...don't just fulfill those pretty words like an idiot!"

"...Someone like you, Kinji, calling me an idiot? However...there's some truth in what you say. I really am an idiot for saving someone stupid like you."

said Aria with a 'Hmph', and turned her head.

I thought that if we continued on this line of conversation, we would just end up getting angry at each other, so I handed the plastic bag from the convenience store over to her.

After a brief silence, Aria's nose started twitching.

"...Peach buns?"

So, she's able to tell from just the smell.

Aria phoenix-camellia eyes fiercely opened wide, and turned towards me.

"Go ahead. I bought the...5 that the store had in stock. You like them, don't you?"

Aria, hearing my words, silently stared at the bag. Before long, she quickly snatched it up.

And she furiously chomped on the peach buns, which had already become cold.

This scene...it's almost exactly like giving food to a wounded animal.

"Don't rush. The peach buns won't run away."

"Shut up. I can eat however I want."

Aria, with a piece of stuffing still on her lips, fired off that sentence at me, and continued to eat her buns in silence.

The food at Butei Hospital is notorious for being absolutely disgusting. She must have been starving in here.

"Whatever...I'll talk while you're eating. After the incident, we found the hotel room the culprit was in."

"...Were there any traces left behind?"

"No. Well, it would be more accurate to say that the traces were erased."

I said, while pulling out the document from my backpack, and placing it on Aria's knee.

"This is the report that summarized everything that Inquesta and Repier, under Mine Riko's supervision, found when they worked together to comb the hotel room. But from the conclusion...it appears that they did not find any clues relating to the culprit."

"As expected. The 'Butei Killer' is an extremely cunning criminal. He would never leave anything behind that could incriminate him."

"So you think...it was the 'Butei Killer'? I suspect that the bicycle-jacking and the bus-jacking were both done by imitators of the 'Butei Killer'. Because, no matter what you say, he's already been apprehended."

"Didn't I tell you? We got the wrong guy."

I...have no way to argue against Aria's point.

Because all the incidents up to now weren't something that a cheap imitator could pull off.

"Also...this report includes the result of investigation of the bike-jacking case. However, to be blunt, the results of that investigation were inconclusive as well. The Segways and the Uzis that the culprit used were stolen goods."

"Those guys are really useless. Reading this is a waste of time."

"If you really think so, then just throw it in the trash."

I didn't think that Aria, as I said, would really throw it in the trash. It made me a little angry.

Although there were no clues in there that could help us find the culprit, it was the result of Riko's team working all night long.

"--Get out. This has nothing to do with you anymore."

"?"

"The first mission since you returned to Assault. Since this mission has already been completed, you have already fulfilled your agreement with me. You can go back to Inquesta. Goodbye."

Eating her peach buns nonchalantly, Aria tossed these words at me.

"What do you mean...you really just do whatever you like. After pulling me into this so firmly, you do this after it's over?"

"Do you want me to apologize to you? Or would you like me to compensate you before you're happy?"

"...Are you trying to provoke me?"

"I want you to get out. To leave me in peace."

"Fine, I'll go."

I felt that I had already reached the limits of my anger.

I don't know why I'm so angry, but every sentence that Aria spoke left me in agony.

Breathing out heavily, I spun around furiously, and walked out of the room.

"What is this..."

I had just put my hand on the door handle, when I heard Aria muttering something behind my back.

"I...I put so much hope in you...I thought that if I brought you to an incident, you would, just-like-that-time, show me your true power!"

"--That was only your desire! I don't have any power like that! Also...I've already decided to quit being a Butei! Why did you raise your hopes so high!?"

Without thinking, I spun around, shouting.

In front of her, I can't...for whatever reason...remain calm.

Aahh, damn it. Why am I doing this?

This isn't like me at all.

"Because I have to! I don't have any time left!"

"What is that supposed to mean!? I don't understand what you're saying at all!"

"If you're a Butei, then find out for yourself, why don't you!? Compared to--compared to me, your reason for quitting being a Butei is irrelevant!"

Irrelevant?

Hearing those words--

Without thinking, I dashed over to her side.

I completely forgot that she was a girl, I was about to grab her collar.

...I restrained my anger, and quickly grabbed hold of my hand, which was just about to reach her.

I grabbed it, I grabbed it with all I had.

"Wh-wh...what is it."

This was her first time seeing me get so angry...and even Aria was afraid.

I rested both my hands on the bed, and lowered my head.

Ahh. My face...

It must be scary.

I don't want anyone to see me like this.

Before, Shirayuki said that in all generations of my family, the Tohyamas were allies of justice.

Although, as the generations moved along, our jobs were different, but we all had the special power of Hysteria Mode--and for centuries, we fought for the sake of the weak.

Before I became self-aware, my father died. He was an 'Armed Prosecutor'. And my brother, who was a Butei, was my hero. I wanted nothing more than to be like him.

So, at that time, I unhesitatingly enrolled in Butei High of my own free will.

Although Hysteria Mode had given me a lot of trouble during Middle School, I had hoped that, like my father and brother, I would be able to activate it at will.

...but, last winter, something changed my life.

The horrible shipwreck at Uraga bay.

On Japan Cruise's cruiseship, the Annbelle, one of the passengers disappeared...the investigation closed without even managing to find the victim's body. It was a horrible incident.

The person who died in that accident, was a Butei that was on the ship by coincidence...Tohyama Kinichi.

Also known as, my brother.

From what the police said, my brother, who always fought for the weak, and who had never lost to evil in his life, was unable to escape, because he was helping the other passengers off the cruise ship.

But scared that the passengers would sue them, the company, as well as those passengers that were burned, fiercely denounced Nii-san.

They said that he 'was unable to help to prevent the accident, a useless Butei'.

From the internet, weekly magazines, and the families of the deceased, came countless slanders, descending like a flood.

Even now, I have nightmares about that time.

--Nii-san, why did you die helping people?

--Why did he become the scapegoat?

This is all because of Hysteria Mode, the penchant of our bloodline! That's right. Butei, the allies of justice, must continue to fight, and fight. They will be torn apart, and they will continue to be shamed, even after death. There's nothing good about being a Butei...!

So I--decided to never do anything idiotic like being a Butei.

I decided to be a normal person.

I could live as those people who just talk, and never take responsibility. I could live a normal life.

That's right, that's what I decided.

I've already made my decision--that's right.

I raised my head, and Aria...was still silent.

When I looked into her camellia eyes, I understood. I understood my own complex feelings towards her.

Because, she's like me.

Aria shoulders something that nobody else could possibly understand, and for the sake of the Butei, she charges in the direction I tried so hard to look away from. Towards that dark outcome.

I chose to run away, but she chose to face it.

Therefore--that's why I cannot stay calm in front of her.

"No matter what...I will give up being a Butei. As for my school, I will switch to a normal one next year."

"..."

"Are you listening to me?"

"I understand...I understood...the person I'm looking for..."

Aria's gaze shifted off me, and she closed her eyes. She only opened them after a long while.

And like a period at the end of the paragraph, in the book you can't continue to write, she said,

"...isn't you."

4th Ammo: Behind the Fringe

In the end, after leaving Aria like that after the fight--This is what happened.

I wonder if it's alright like this?

This is... Before, this is exactly what I wanted.

At that bus jacking incident, even now, I showed myself who can't do anything.

That's why Aria was disappointed in me and released me.

Thanks to that, I can leave the assault section. Now I can waste my time in peace in the Inquesta section and transfer to a normal school next year. Then, I can wash the traces of the world of Butei off my hands and become a normal adult.

Isn't that great?

But.....What's with this feeling of desolation?

After that, I just don't know. Being bothered by the irritation I was feeling, I wasted away the weekend.

Click.....Click.

Even if she was looking at TV or the internet, the clicking sound of the clincher never stopped.

The Sunday morning of the day I heard about Aria's hospital discharge--This morning, while thinking about her, I immersed myself in doing my laundry and cleaning.

But, because of that--

I coincidentally saw Aria at an unexpected place in the afternoon.

At the campus island's beauty parlor on the corner.

I saw her as I was leaving the laundry place that was next to the beauty parlor. My legs unconsciously stopped as I saw her not-so-transformed look.

Since she didn't notice me, it once again looks like I'm peeping.....

"....."

With a heavy look, Aria left her pigtails as they were and changed her hairdo just a bit.

She got bangs.

It was cute like that, but that was-- I don't even need to ask. It's probably to conceal the scar on her forehead.

While thinking that, I once again felt a sharp pain in my chest.

Like a cherry with white fur, Aria snorted like a mule and headed to the monorail station.

Those clothes were--normal clothes.

Since I've only seen her C equipment and uniform, seeing her like this, like a normal girl was refreshing.

Aria was wearing a neat, plain, pale pink patterned dress. It was a modern style that looked like it escaped from a fashion magazine.

If you were to take a photo of Aria right now and put it on a magazine cover, the clothes would sell like hot cakes.

But.....even if Aria paid attention to her personal grooming usually, I've never seen her dress up so much.

I wonder where she's going.

(For a date?)

There's no need for questions.

It's probably a date.

.....Aria's boyfriend.

Does she have one?

I wonder what type of guy he is.

While thinking that I--realized that I was doing it unconsciously and I didn't know why I was.

I was stalking Aria for the first time.

Aria left the monorail at Shinbashi and from there went to the direction of Kanda by JR... She got off at Shinjuku.

While following from a little behind, I saw that the guys on the street were taking fluttering glances at Aria.

It's to be expected. There's seldom a girl as cute as Aria. It would be strange for her to not get attention after she put so much effort into getting dressed up.

Aria went to the skyscraper from the west entrance. She was going slowly and snorting like a mule while walking.

This is also an unexpected direction.

This is an office building where those types of people work at... Then, is her boyfriend a working adult?

While thinking that, I continued to tail her—Aria stopped in front of an unexpected building.

It was the Shinjuku Police Station.

If she was coming here, why did she go to the trouble of dressing up?

"...Pitiful shadowing. I can see your tail wriggling."

When Aria turned around and suddenly said that, I felt like I drank a pole.

—What.

I was found out.

"Ah... Um. You said it to me before. 「Even without a question, if you're a Butei, you'd investigate for yourself」."

It was awkward so I talked like an offender accusing a victim while Aria stood horizontally.

"If you found out, then why didn't you say anything?"

"I hesitated. I don't know if I have the power to teach you. You're also a victim of the Butei Killer and you're alone."

"?"

"Well, I've already arrived. Even if I drive you away, you'd still follow, right?"

After she said that, Aria became ambitious like usual.

While Aria entered the police station, I followed along with many question marks floating above my head.

In the Imprisoned People Visiting Room were two admins guarding. A beautiful woman came across the acrylic plank; I recognized her.

If I'm not mistaken.....There was a cameo embedded in Aria's revolver's grip. There was a carving there of a woman that Aria looked a lot like.

Soft curvy long hair that looks like it was drawn. Almost onyx colored eyes. White porcelain skin like Aria's.

"Oh my...Aria. Is he your boyfriend?"

"N, no, Mama."

Looking a bit surprised from seeing me, the lady who gently raised her voice was...

Aria's mother.

S, she looks so young.

Instead of her mother, she looks like a long separated older sister.

"Then, he's an important friend? Oooh? Aria's at an appropriate age where she gets a boyfriend. Even pitiful Aria can make friends. Fufu. Ufufu..."

"You're wrong. He's Tohyama Kinji. He's a student at Butei High School—We're not like that. Absolutely."

Aria declared that and her mother gently narrowed her long eyelashes.

It would have been fine for her to not so clearly deny it.

"...Kinji-san, nice to meet you. I'm Aria's mother—Kanzaki Kanae. It seems you've been helping my daughter."

"Ah, no..."

Despite being in this kind of room, Kanae-san's gentle atmosphere covered us completely.

To be honest, I'm not good with these types of people.

I don't have any pattern and become nervous so I can't talk very well.

Aria went and—leaned toward the direction of the acrylic plate.

"Mama. I only have three minutes, so we'll only talk for a short while but... This stupid hairpiece is the Butei Killer's. They injured 3 other people too. Last week, the Butei Killer planted a bomb on a bike."

"...Oh my..."

Kanae-san's expression stiffened.

"There's also one more case, the day before yesterday, there was a bus hijacking incident. That guy's actions are suddenly more active now. That means he'll show his tail soon. That's why I'll aim for the Butei Killer and catch him. Even if it's just that, we can prove your innocence and your prison sentence of 864 years can be reduced to 742 in one stroke. Before your case gets to the Supreme Court, I'll definitely do something about the rest of them."

—At Aria's words, my eyes widened.

"And, I'll throw in all the I-U members in here."

"Aria. I'm happy for your feelings, but it's still too early to be challenging I-U — Have you found a partner?"

"That's... I can't find one no matter what I do. No one will follow me..."

"That's no good, Aria. Your talent is inherited. But like your family—you have inherited their excessive pride and childishness. Without a partner, you can't even display half of your ability. You need a partner that understands you and will stick with you no matter what happens. The right partner can more than double your power— Your great grandfather had a great partner, right?"

"...They told me that so often in London that my ears got calluses. They even said I was defective because I couldn't find a partner... But..."

"A child who runs too fast will fall. Walk through life slowly."

Saying that, Kanae-san slowly blinked her long eyelashes.

"Kanzaki. It's time."

The admin standing at the wall informed her while looking at the clock.

"Mama, wait. I'll definitely catch the real criminals by the trial."

"You shouldn't be impatient, Aria. I'm worried about you. Don't go charging in alone."

"I don't want to! I want to save you as soon as possible!"

"Aria. My lawyer is working very hard to postpone the Supreme Court date as long as possible. Focus on finding a proper partner first. That scar on your forehead proves that you're mixed up in danger that you can't handle by yourself anymore."

Kanae-san had noticed the bandage that was covering the scar behind Aria's bangs and scolded her.

"No, no, no!"

"Aria...!"

"It's time!"

The admin did a form like a wing judo choke to pull Kanae-san back when she leaned forward from the acrylic plate in order to soothe the agitated Aria.

Kanae-san let out a small gasp of 'ah'.

"Stop it! Don't treat Mama violently!"

Looking like a wild animal baring its fangs, Aria's camellia eyes held rage and she leaped toward the acrylic plate.

But the plate was thick and solid despite being transparent. Of course it didn't budge in the slightest and it wouldn't let Aria pass.

While Kanae-san looked at Aria with worrying eyes, the two guards pulled her away.

The visiting room's interior door was a creamy color and looked soft, but contrary to its appearance, a heavy metallic sound resounded—

The door closed.

"I'll sue them. They have no right to treat her like that. I'll definitely...sue them."

Saying only that, Aria returned to Shinjuku station in weather that threatened rain...

I wanted to call out to her.

But like a shadow, I followed silently behind her.

"..."

Walk, walk, walk.

Snorting like a mule, Aria went in front of a window and suddenly—

Wa...lk. She stopped.

I also stopped.

From behind, Aria's face was down, her shoulders were drooping, and if you looked carefully, you could see her hands clenched and trembling.

Drip.

Drip...Drip.

Drops of water fell and split open at her feet.

That was... I didn't even need to hear it. They were Aria's tears.

"Aria..."

"I'm not crying."

Saying that like she was angry, Aria hung her head and shook.

In the gloomy wind, each and every person walking in the town street grinned at us who were stopped in the middle of the street.

They must be thinking we're having a lovers' quarrel or something.

"Hey...Aria."

I walked in front of Aria and everyone stooped over like a peeping tom to peek at her face.

Drop...Drop. Drop.

Her bangs were hiding her eyes, her head was hanging, pearl-like tears traced down her white cheek.

"I'm...not..."

With that said, Aria clenched her teeth and from her intensely closed eyes, tears kept flowing.



And,

"crying... Waa...Uaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Like a thread was cut, Aria began to cry.

I averted my gaze from her face and looked up, but she kept crying like a child.

Her loud voice vibrated in my chest.

"Uaaaaaaaaaaa...Mamaa...Mamaaaaaaa...!"

The evening street had a bright neon sign playing a fun piece of music and advertising the latest electronic appliances and fashionable clothes. The flickering lights played on Aria's pink hair and illuminated it.

Like a final blow, it began to rain.

Every person and every car passed by us.

The girl with a cellphone by her ear went 'Kyahahahaha! For real!? I'll take it!' With such a loud voice, she walked past us while talking.

...I.

Aria was still crying in the midst of the noise and I could do nothing.

But, in silence, I stood next to her.

Tokyo had been suffering from strong winds since the beginning of the week. It was normal course lessons and the seat on my right was empty.

Aria was absent from school.

Earlier, after crying in the street, Aria said 'I want to be alone', so in the end, we parted there.

On that day, I found Aria by chance, since she was alone I followed her to where her mother was... I learned a lot of things.

I know.

—Aria's mother was suspected of being the 'Butei Killer' and arrested.

And she has already been declared guilty in court.

It's likely that they applied to the lower court reserve system— Since there was enough evidence, it quickly went to the higher courts. This system expedites the move from lower to higher courts, thereby preventing delays to the trial.

At that higher court, a 864 year prison sentence was made by the judge. In reality, it was a life sentence.

I thought about the conversation in the visiting room. Aria's mother was suspected of more then just the series of murders by the 'Butei Killer'. Aria claims all of the charges were false and wants to exonerate her mother. Since she was a Butei, she's trying to find the real criminals.

Also—about the partner thing.

The 'H' bring out their full potential by pairing up with exceptional partners. So, it appears that it's a family well-known to the police, and with a superior partner their abilities rapidly increase and they are able to accrue achievements.

For that reason, Aria is also seeking a partner but—

She couldn't find one.

That's obvious though.

To find someone that can match that child prodigy is no easy task. Aria referred to her 'partner' as a 'slave' because she was looking for a partner and testing out their ability and wanted to lower the standard required. It was probably her way of reducing the psychological burden being placed upon her.

As I vaguely thought about it, I couldn't concentrate on the lesson at all. When the Inquesta lesson ended—a mail came to my cellphone.

It was from Riko.

"Kii-kun. Once classes are over, come to the private room in Club Estella. I have something important to talk to you about."

If I was the normal me, I would have decided to ignore her.

In the first place, I avoid invitations from girls, but because of Riko's 'important talk', it might be important.

But, this time...the case is rather special.

Riko has been investigating anything related to the bus hijacking incident last week. That's why she wasn't here again today for the Inquesta lesson. And today, Aria is absent, so I'm a bit worried for some reason.

Since I was asked, just to make sure, I headed to the monorail for the club.

I was a bit hesitant when I arrived at Club Estella. It seemed to be a high class karaoke establishment.

I stopped at the shockingly pink modded Vespa in the parking lot for bikes.

What bad taste for coloring. There's a resemblance. It's Riko's.

At first glance, it looks like a normal 50cc Vespa decorated with shockingly bad taste, but without lights and with some modding by Mutou it has become something that is no longer able to pass a vehicle inspection. According to Riko, it goes 150 km/hour and can jump.

Without lights... Honestly Mutou, choose your jobs.

It's 6 o'clock in the evening right now.

The vivid sunset looked awfully like blood. The deep blue sky and clouds were quickly washed away.

This means a typhoon is nearing Tokyo. The wind is strong.

As I entered the club, I saw an office lady returning from her company and her date pecking at a cake like in a movie. If I look around, there are Butei High School girls here and there too. This place is popular.

"Kiiii-kuuuuuun!"

Riko, wearing her lolita uniform again, came jogging from inside.

Today is...even more amazing. Especially the skirt's carnations, which were like flower petals fluttering and bouncing. That was a pain which was called bloomers.

"You. You skipped lessons... What are you doing here?"

"Kufu. I wore my best clothes. But, since Kii-kun didn't come easily, if you gave me the cold shoulder, 'What would I do?' is what I thought. I'm so happy."

"This isn't about me giving you the cold shoulder or not."

"Aah, you're so cold. This is Riko's route here, you know!?"

"What's with that? I don't get what you mean."

The laughing Riko's upturned eyes were strangely charming, so I clicked my tongue.

Should I have not come? What's up with her?

Riko hung on my arm and intertwined it with her own. With a triumphant look, she proceeded into the interior of the shop.

Seeing that, the Butei High School girls whispered amongst themselves.

"No way. Kinji is going out with Riko-chan this time."

"I wonder if Kinji likes chibis."

"There's also Hotogi-san, so I don't think that's it."

Hey, you guys there. I can hear you. Don't misunderstand twofold and threefold.

Riko pushed through and went into a private room. It was a two person room decorated by Al Nouveau. Riko made me sit on the fluffy and soft couch. She sat down next to me with a skirt that was like something a princess from a fairytale would wear. She pointed out the Mont Blanc and black tea on the table and winked.

"Since I'm the one who called you out, eeeverything is my treat."

With that said, Riko took her sweet milk tea and drank it while staring at me with her big eyes.

"Puha. Heey, Kii-kun. You got into a fight with Aria, right?"

"That... That has nothing to do with you."

"It does. Kii-kun, being friendly with Aria is no good."

"What do you mean?"

"If you are, Riko won't have fun!"

Riko took a sharp stab at her Mont Blanc with a fork and laughed.

Her real intention was on her face.

"Here, Kii-kun, say 'aaaa'."

The cut up pieces of the Mont Blanc were on the fork she held out in my direction.

"As if, idiot."

"—「Butei Killer」—" Riko showed me the cut up card—

I widened my eyes.

"—You've...found out something, haven't you?"

"If you say 'aaaaaa', I'll tell you."

It's embarrassing enough for me to die, but it's a situation where I have to make some sacrifices.

I took a mouthful of Riko's Mont Blac and looked at her for some answers.

"Kufu. You know. There was some data at the Metropolitan Police Department.... In the past, the people killed in a bike jacking and a car jacking weren't the only victims of the 'Butei Killer'."

"What do you mean?"

"There's a possibility of an event. It might have been an accident, but in reality, it's more likely that they're just concealing the Butei Killer's acts so people don't know."

"Is there really a record of that?"

"I found it."

Riko took out a paper that was folded four times from her pocket. Like magic, she slowly, slowly, unfolded it and showed it to me.

"—!"

My blood froze.

「2008, December, National Holiday. Uragaoki Shipwreck Incident. Deaths. Tohyama Kinichi, Butei (19)」

"This name is your older brother's, right? Heey, isn't this a sea-jacking?"

I hear Riko's voice frightfully far away.

—Butei Killer.

What are you?

Who are you?

Why do you know that Ani is?

Why do you know who Ani is? Why are you targeting me—!?

"Good."

Feverishly, Riko's voice brought me back.

After meeting my eyes, Riko calmly narrowed her eyes.

"Good, Kinji. Kinji, that—look. I'm chilled."

With an expression as if she was pleased, Riko came closer to the upper half of my body.

"Je t'aime à croquer. At the entrance examination time, Kinji's look—I was taken by first sight."

"—Riko?"

At the entrance examination time, the me in hysteria mode took her baby-like hand and twisted it to bring her down.

Is she talking about that time?

"Kinji."

In the narrow private room, Riko showed me movements that were like a beast.

She clung to me.

All of a sudden, she pushed me onto the couch.

"—Riko!?"

"Kinji, you're so dense when it comes to love. It's like you became dense on purpose. Hey...do you know? This is already an H event scene, you know?"

Riko took her long hair and her left and right tail and wrapped it around my head as if to conceal it.

There was just 5 centimeters between my face and Riko's.

She was different from Aria. She smelled like vanilla, almond, and something sweet.

Riko brought her lips near my cheek at a distance where she could touch my lips or not. She came near my ear. Cut. She bit my ear.

I, it hurts.

"Hey, Kinjii. I went out of my way to ask for a high private room... It's okay for you to play a game...."

Together with a hot and painful whisper, Riko approached my whole body.

Ri...Riko. Was Riko such a—sexy girl?

The guys in Inquesta called her 'a loli with a huge chest', but now that she's pressing them against me I understand.

Even though she is always dressing up, acting stupid, and has a taste for childish stuff.

"Kinji. No one will find out since we're in this room. Shirayuki is in the S dorms and Aria went back to England. There was talk that she would be going back on a charter flight at 7PM... Nnn, it's already too late, definitely. That's why... Do something good with Riko, okay? Kufufu."

Because the temptation was so sudden I didn't have enough time to prepare.

When—I realized it,

I was going—into hysteria mode.

"—!"

At that moment, there was a flash inside my head.

The stuff I heard from Riko just now and the past events was like an electromagnet on me that was tied together by one wire.

That wire was...

terrible. The ending that cannot be allowed was connected.

—This is bad.

This is really bad.

If I can just move right now!

"Sorry—!"

The me in hysteria mode slipped away from Riko's hands right in front of her. Pachin!

It was the sound of repelling a finger.

Riko went 'myu' and at the moment blinked.

"Mistress, isn't it about time for you to go to bed?"

"An!?"

I held up that small body.

I switched my bodies with Riko's so she was lying on the couch.

Standing up with my hair waving, I left the room.

My mind inside hysteria mode—

5th Ammo: Holmes

No matter how much I'm stimulated, I can only maintain my Hysteria Mode for a few minutes.

By the time I reached Terminal 2 of Haneda Airport, I had already reverted to normal mode.

Even though I've reverted, I still have to stop her.

If my suspicions are correct.

Aria will soon meet him. Soon she'll meet the--

'Butei Killer'!

I flashed the badge on my Butei License to bypass security, and of course, I didn't go through the metal detector. I went in directly.

Aria.

I'm fine if you go back.

But I will not let you fight with the 'Butei Killer' for any reason. Because the 'Butei Killer' even killed my brother--so, alone, you have no chance of defeating the 'Butei Killer'. You have no chance at all!

My brother was very powerful.

Nobody could match him. He was extremely smart as well. His Hysteria Mode was in a different league from mine.

(Aria--!)

If you run into him again, you won't get off with just a scar on your forehead!

You will be killed.

You will die!

I rushed into the boarding entrance, just as the doors started to close on flight ANA600. The Boeing 737-350 was already preparing to fly towards London's Heathrow Airport.

"--I'm a Butei! Stop this flight!"

I flashed my Butei badge at the flight attendant, who stood there, eyes wide open in shock.

"Ar-are you a passenger? I'm sorry, wh-what's happening?"

"There's no time to explain! You have to stop this flight from taking off!"

The stewardess nodded, afraid, then she quickly ran up the stairs to the 2nd floor.

I was going to go with her to see the pilot, but at that moment, my knees collapsed. This was because my stamina had plummeted since leaving Assault. After sprinting all the way here, I was out of energy. I couldn't move even one step.

But...I should be able to stop the flight, right?

--I had just thought this, when,

Vroom

The plane started to shake.

The plane...is moving!

"A-ah...it wasn't approved. The pi-pilot said that, according to the rules, in this phase of the flight, we can only stop if the Airport Control Officer says so..."

said the stewardess, who had just run down the stairs, trembling.

"That bastard...!"

"Pi-please don't fire your gun! Are you really a Butei? When I told him, the pilot shouted 'He wants me to stop the flight? I never received any notice of this!'"

Tha-that idiot...!

What am I going to do?

Should I use my gun to force him to stop?

No. I can't. If what the stewardess says is true, the pilot doesn't trust me. Even if I threaten him, he probably won't stop the plane.

I looked outside, flight ANA600 was already starting to taxi up the runway.

If I force the plane to stop right now, we might crash into another plane on the runway.

Kinji, think of something! We can't use this method anymore!

Since the enemy has taken action first, if I don't think of something to oppose him, we will lose.

--I must change the plan.

The plane slowly gained altitude until it had reached the upper reaches of the sky. The seat-belt light was off as well.

There was nothing I could do but let the stewardess calm down...then I told her to bring me to Aria's seat...no, compartment.

The cabins of this plane were obviously different, compared to normal ones.

The first floor was a spacious bar, and the 2nd floor had one main corridor with compartments on each side.

This--I recently heard about it in the news.

It was nicknamed an 'Air Hotel'. All the seats were converted into compartments. In short, an ultra-luxury passenger flight.

There are no normal seats in this plane, and just like a high class hotel, there are 12 compartments. Each compartment has a bed and a shower, basically a special plane made especially for the rich.

"...Kin-Kinji!?"

Inside a compartment decorated with fresh flowers, was Aria, who was extremely surprised by my sudden appearance from below.

"...as expected of nobility. The one-way ticket for this flight cost...what, 200000 yen?"

I said, looking at the queen sized bed.

At that moment, Aria stood up and stared down at me.

"--Barging into my room uninvited...You're way too rude!"

"You have no right to tell me that."

I'm not sure whether she was thinking back to when she intruded in my house, but she let it go with a 'Hmph', although she was still angry.

"...Why did you follow me?"

"Why does the sun rise? Why does the moon shine?"

"Stop talking nonsense! If you don't tell me, I'll make a hole in you!"

So...she resorts to threatening to shoot me again--Pat! Aria places her hands on the sides of her skirt.

Seeing this, I relaxed a little.

Good. She brought her guns.

"Butei Law article 2. 「You must fulfill the contract in the commission」."

"...?"

"This is what I agreed with you. After I came back, the first mission that we go on, that one mission, I would solve with you--the case of the 'Butei Killer' has not been solved yet, right?"

"What is this...even though you were unable to do anything, even though you couldn't help one bit, you still dare to say this?"

Roar! Aria, roaring like a lion cub, bared her canines at me.

"Go back! Thanks to you, it's more clear than ever. After all this, I'm still an [Aria]! There's nobody in the world that could be my partner! So, whether it's the 'Butei Killer' or something else, I will only rely on myself to fight!"

"...I really wish you could've said that to me earlier."

I sat down on the other seat in the compartment, and purposefully looked back at the city.

"...Once we reach London, you're going back. As compensation, I'll buy you an Economy ticket back. You're a stranger to me now! Don't talk to me anymore!"

"I was originally a stranger to you...right?"

"Shut up! You're banned from speaking!"

Flight ANA600, in the midst of the strong winds, flew over Tokyo Bay.

Aria, puffing out her cheeks, folded her arms and legs while sitting on her seat. She continued to stare out the window unhappily.

I--started to realize something.

Who cares if we're going to London or wherever, the destination doesn't matter to me. Since this is the way things are,, all I can do is wait.

"--Passengers, my apologies. Because we have to avoid the turbulence caused by the typhoon, we will reach our destination half an hour later--"

Following the announcement, Flight ANA600 shook slightly.

This shaking isn't really out of the ordinary, yet...

Boom! Boom Boom-!

The sound of thunder roared out from a relatively close thunderhead.

Rumble--!!

A huge thunderbolt rang out...Aria suddenly opened her eyes wide, and covered her head.

"Are you scared?"

"I-I'm not scared. Don't look down on me! Anyways, don't talk to me. It's annoying."

Right after she said that, the noise of thunder shook the cabin again.

"Kyaa!"

Looking at Aria, who yelped in surprise, I couldn't help but laugh.

I never thought that Quadra Aria-sama has something that she's afraid of as well. And, it's something like thunder!

"If you're afraid, then you should go tremble under your blankets."

"Shu-shut up!"

"This is something serious for little kids, right?"

"I-I-idiot!"

Rumble rumble--!!

Another round of earsplitting thunder rang out, rendering Aria unable to sit still. She jumped from her seat, panicked.

And, she really did hide under her blankets.

This scene was exactly how I pictured it, so I...although it was a serious time like this, started laughing uncontrollably. Looks like she really might still be a little kid.

"Aria-. Did you bring your diapers?"

"Idiot Kinji! I-I'll make a hole in you in a moment!"

Ahahahahaha. She really is trembling!

Rumble--!! Rumble--!!

I'm not sure whether her luck was bad, or whether the pilot's skills were bad. This plane seems to be close to thunderclouds.

"~~~~~Ki-Kinji!~~~~~"

A cry coming out from under the blankets, Aria, unable to take it any longer, grabbed onto my sleeve.

"Alright, alright. Don't be scared. I'll switch on the TV for you."

For Aria, who was grabbing on to my sleeve like a child, I reached my other hand out for the remote and turned on the TV, and went through the channels. The newest movies and anime flashed across the screen...

I stopped the channel at what seemed to be a Period Drama aimed at teenagers.

"--This falling sakura on my body, you've seen it before, haven't you--!"

Eh...This, is a period drama about my ancestors...

His name is, Tohyama Kin-sama.

According to Nii-san, this ancestor of mine also had the DNA of Hysteria Mode--He was an exhibitionist, but it seemed that whenever he took off his clothes, his thinking power, as well as his physical strength would increase.

"Alright, just watch this to take your mind off the thunder."

"Uhh, mm"

Looks like the rule that Aria set down about me not being able to speak has already been lifted.

Her hand, still holding on to my sleeve, was trembling. It looked so small, so delicate...

This time, I can acknowledge that these are the hands of a normal girl. If--only if.

Right now, if she is a normal girl.

Then, in normal mode, as a normal boy,

"Aria."

I would...put my hand on her trembling hand...like this.

"Kin-Kinji...?"

That's right.

As normal students. As friends.

The least I can do, is stop her trembling--

After hesitating for a few seconds, Aria's fingers closed around my hand...when...

Bang! Bang!

--rang out from inside the plane.

This time, the sound wasn't from thunder, but a noise that us Butei High students were very familiar with--

A gunshot!

I charged out of the door, only to see that the narrow corridor was already in chaos.

From the 12 compartments, passengers and stewardesses came pouring out--all these people were shouting in panic.

I looked towards the front of the plane, where the gunshot came from, and noticed that the pilot's cabin had been opened.

"!"

That panicked, short stewardess from just now was standing there.

She was in the middle of dragging the pilot and co-pilot out of the cabin.

Something had happened to the two pilots, as they didn't move a muscle.

Seeing the stewardess dumping two people into the corridor, I hurriedly drew my gun.

"Don't move!"

Hearing my voice, the stewardess looked up and smiled, as if she hadn't heard what I said.

Afterwards, she winked at me, returned to the cabin, and said-

"Attention Please."

-while removing a canister from her chest, and throwing it this way.

The canister, hitting my foot, struck me with terror.

"Kinji!"

Suppressing her terror of the thunder, Aria called out while coming out of the room.

Hiss.....!

I could tell from the noise.

This was--a poison gas capsule.

Sarin, soman, tabun, phosgene, Zyklon B. All the poison gases I had learned about during Assault flashed into the forefront of my brain. If this is a strong one, we're finished.

"--Everyone, get back into your rooms! Seal the doors!"

I yelled, while pushing Aria back.

However, when I was about to shut the door--the airplane shook violently.

Pft, the lights inside the airplane blinked off, making the passengers go into a state of panic.

The red emergency lights quickly replaced the darkness inside the plane.

"--Kinji! Are you okay!?"

I turned my head towards Aria, and checked my own breathing.

I can breath. I can see. My limbs aren't paralyzed either. Looks like the enemy pulled one on us, the gas she threw just now was harmless.

"Aria. Just now, that playful tone...that guy was the 'Butei Killer'. As I expected, he's appeared."

"...As you expected...? You knew that the 'Butei Killer' would appear?"

Her camellia eyes opened wide.

I decided to tell her what I had thought up during Hysteria Mode.

"The incident with the 'Butei Killer' was only after the hijacking of the motorcycle and the hijacking of the car--I just found out about this, but the offender also hijacked a cruise ship--and killed a Butei. Also, that was probably a direct battle."

"...what makes you think that?"

"Because the incident with the cruise ship was the only one you didn't know about. You didn't receive an electronic signal then."

"Ah, un."

"That's because the 'Butei Killer' didn't release an electronic signal. Which means that he wasn't controlling the cruise ship from afar. He was on the cruise ship itself."

Also, I was very suspicious as to why my amazingly powerful brother, was unable to escape.

"However, from a motorcycle, to a car, to a cruise ship...these methods of transport slowly became bigger. However, they suddenly became smaller again. First it was my bicycle, then a bus."

"...!"

"Do you understand now, Aria? That guy was targeting you from the start, and you walked right into it. The reason he forced those charges on Kanae-san, was because he was declaring war with you. And, like Nii-san--no, like the Butei he killed on the cruise ship, in the 3rd incident, in other words, now, he will fight you. This, is a hijacking."

Hearing my reasoning, Aria began gritting her teeth in regret.

At that moment--

Dada-dadadada. Dada-. Dada-dada-da-...

The seatbelt lights, as well as the warning tone, began blinking on and off, continuously.

"...Japanese morse code..."

The words that slipped out of Aria's mouth led me to try and decode it, in the middle of the swaying plane.

Come. Come. I-U is heaven.

Come. Come. I am in the bar in the first floor.

"...he's luring us in."

"Alright. I'll make sure to make a hole in him."

Aria hardened her brows, and drew her guns from under her skirt.

"I'll go with you. I don't know whether the me right now can help you, though."

"You don't need to come."

Rumble--!! The thunder rang out again, and Aria's body immediately stiffened.

"And?"

"...Co-come."

We followed the small points of light on the ground, cautiously entering the first floor.

The first floor was decorated as an extremely luxurious bar.

Under the chandelier in the bar,

A girl was sitting cross-legged, next to the counter.

"!?"

We frowned in shock, pointing our guns at the girl.

Because she...was wearing a Butei High uniform.

And also, it was...a fluffy, modified uniform, filled with white frills.

That fluffy skirt, bulging like a petal of a carnation, was the one that I had seen Riko wearing in Odaiba.

"So, you walked into this one as well."

said the stewardess, taking off her mask.

And under it, was the face of--

"--Riko!?"

"Bonsoir."

so said Riko, drinking the blue cocktail in her hand. So, the person who winked at me, was Riko.

I was stunned.

When we parted ways at Odaiba, she--rode that modified Vespa to get here first? And then, she used her Butei badge to get on the plane, where she pretended to be a stewardess--and infiltrated this aircraft?

"A lot of the people who have a high IQ, and good battle skills, inherited them. In Butei High, there are quite a lot of the elite, who have inherited their skills. However...your family is different, Holmes."

"--!"

The last word that Riko spoke, jolted through Aria's body, and she stiffened completely.

Holmes--?

Is that what the 'H' family in Aria's name stands for?

"What kind...of person are you...!"

Looking at Aria's stiffened brow, Riko lightly laughed.

Light shone through the window, and illuminated her face.

"Riko Mine Lupin the 4th--That is Riko's real name."

...Lupin...?

You mean...that Lupin? The one in the Inquesta textbooks, the French thief?

You mean that Riko is, Arsène Lupin's...great grand-child!?

"But...my relatives don't call me 'Riko', my name. All of them don't call me this cute name that my mother bestowed upon me. Instead, the name they call me is too weird..."

"Weird...?"

"The 4th. The 4th. The 4th. 4th-sama. Everybody, even my servants...call me that. It's horrible."

"Wh-what's wrong with that...calling you the 4th isn't wrong."

Hearing Aria's logical reasoning, Riko stared at her furiously.

"Of course it's wrong!! Am I a number!? Am I just a representative of my DNA!? I am Riko! I'm not a number! Why is everybody like this!"

Riko said, suddenly going berserk.

She screamed, but it seemed as if she was screaming to somebody other than us.

"If I don't exceed my great-grandfather, then my life won't be even thought of as mine. Instead, I'll just be 'Lupin's great-grandchild'. Because of this, I joined I-U, and have gained the power that I have now! With this power, I will take what is mine. My own identity."

Aria intently listened to these words, which I didn't understand at all.

"Wait, wait a moment. What are you saying...!? What is Holmes, what is I-U, and is the 'Butei Killer'...really you!?"

"...'Butei Killer'? Yeah, that's me."

Riko's gaze turned back to Aria, and she continued to speak,

"But that's just a game. My real target is Holmes the 4th--Aria. That's you."

Right now, the expression in her eyes was completely different from the Riko I knew.

That was the expression that a predator has, when looking at its prey.



"A century ago, our great-grandfathers fought, and neither side came out on top. Which also means, if I defeat Holmes the 4th, I will have proven that I have exceeded my great-grandfather. Kinji...you fulfilled the role I gave you, right?"

That beast's glare turned towards me.

"Those of the Holmes bloodline must have a partner. The first Holmes, who fought with my great-grandfather, also had an excellent partner. So, to fulfill this condition, I gave you this role."

"Aria and I...all this was your...?"

"That's right."

Riko returned to her normal, lively air, and laughed.

This person...

Has she been pretending to be the idiot, Riko, all this time?

"The person who put the bomb on Kinji's bicycle, and then sent out that extremely recognizable electronic signal, was me."

"...So you knew I was tracking down the signal of the 'Butei Killer'!"

"Of course. It's your fault for going into Connect without hiding your intentions at all. However, because Kinji wasn't a good match with you...I helped out a little during the bus-jacking."

"You were also responsible for the bus-jacking...!?"

"Kinji. A Butei, for whatever reason, cannot give his watch to somebody else, right? If you don't have the accurate time, you might miss the bus, right?"

My watch--So, the watch that Riko broke in the greenhouse, was part of her plan?

She made the excuse of fixing it for me, and then took it and fiddled with it.

That's why I didn't make it onto the 7:58 bus--

"So you're saying...everything's been happening according to your plans...!"

"Yeah. Isn't it? Well, something unexpected happened. After the bus-jacking, Kinji and Aria didn't become partners. That was totally unexpected. And also, Kinji only started taking action when I told you about the death of your brother. I didn't see that coming."

Nii-san.

"...could it be that...you...my brother...!?"

Nii-san.

He was my ideal, the person I most respected.

And my brother...by Riko...!

I understand.

I understand that right now, my body is howling for blood.

This is my weakness.

Once it involves my brother, I cannot calm down!

"Haha. Hey, Aria. Your partner cannot be stopped now, you know? Fight together with him!"

Riko. As expected of Lupin the 4th. All this was part of your plan, right...!

"Kinji. I'll tell you something good. About that, your brother...is my lover right now."

"SHUT UP!"

"Kinji! She's baiting you! Calm down!"

"HOW CAN I CALM DOWN!"

I won't let you disgrace my dead brother anymore!

Just when I was about to pull the trigger of my tightly gripped Beretta.

The plane started swaying again.

"!"

"Oh-my♪"

When I regained consciousness, I noticed--the Beretta in my hand had disappeared, and with a clanking noise, it was sliding around on the ground behind me.

I turned back, but only saw a small gun--a Walther P99 was aimed at me, by a smiling Riko.

"Non, Non. That won't do, Kinji. Right now, you're useless in battle. And anyways, Holmes' partner wasn't meant for battle. He was meant to make observations from a normal person's perspective, drawing out Holmes' power. If you don't work hard at that..."

Riko absentmindedly stated her reasoning--and at that moment, Aria moved.

She was exactly like a lion cub.

With a *Thud!*, she kicked off the ground, and directed her twin guns at Riko.

She probably thought she could win, looking at the opponent's armaments.

In close combat between Butei, who normally wear bulletproof vests, bullets aren't something that can kill immediately. Instead, it becomes a tool for dealing blows.

Which means, the most important thing is firepower.

If under Riko's skirt were 2 Uzis, which are able to hold up to 30 bullets, then she would have a heavy advantage. However, the Walther in her hands, can normally only hold 16 bullets.

As opposed to this, Aria's Colt should hold 7 bullets. If she has one in the chamber, then 8.

Also, she has 2, so the maximum number of bullets would be 16. Exactly the same as the enemy.

However--

"Aria. Don't assume that you're the only one with two guns, OK?"

Riko tossed the shot glass away, and with her empty hand--
she drew another Walther P99 from under her skirt.

"!"

But, there was no stopping Aria now.

Bang Bang Bang Bang! Following the gunshots, Aria started attacking Riko from close range.

"Ku... you bastard!"

"Aha, ahahahahaha!"

Aria and Riko started having an Aru=Kata gunfight.

Butei Law article 9.

「Regardless of the situation, a Butei cannot kill」.

Aria, following this rule, wasn't aiming at Riko's head.

and Riko, as if following a common agreement, was not aiming at Aria's head.

As if it was a normal fight, they continued to exchange bullets.

For Butei's, Aru=Kata gunfights are a matter of avoiding the opponent's line of fire, or disrupting the opponent's aim.

Bang! Bang Bang!

Their bullets didn't meet their targets, and instead buried themselves into the floors and walls.

"--Ha!"

When Aria was out of bullets, she used her legs to suppress Riko's arms.

The two seemed to be embracing each other, but Riko continued to open fire.

Alright! In terms of combat skill, Aria has the upper hand--!

"Kinji!"

Without waiting for Aria's cry, I had already drawn the only thing Nii-san had left behind, a butterfly knife. The blade was glowing red under the emergency lights.

"Riko, it's over!"

When I was focusing on the guns behind Aria's back, and carefully approaching--

"It's coincidental that you're a Quadra as well, Aria."

said Riko, suddenly.

"Riko and Aria are very similar in a lot of places. Bloodline, attractiveness, and...title."

"?"

"I have the same title as you, Aria. Riko the Quadra. However,"

My feet had frozen in place.

In front of my eyes, appeared something that could not be possible, and I instinctively stopped in my tracks.

What...is that!?

"You aren't a true Quadra. Because you haven't yet experienced this kind of power--!"

shh...*Shhh*

Riko said, laughing, while one of the 2 strands of her hair started separating from the other--and just like Medusa from the myths, it started moving--

Kich!

That strand of hair grasped a dagger, hidden in Riko's back, and it struck towards Aria.

This first attack was dodged by an astounded Aria--

Kach!

But the other strand of hair had grabbed another dagger, and the following attack sent Aria's blood spraying through the air.

"Uwaah!"

Aria screamed, falling on her back.

She was cut in the side of her head. That deep, camellia blood started to leak out of her wound.

"Aha...Ahaha...great-grandfather. I never thought that in 108 years, there would be such a enormous difference between our two houses. This can't be called a fight. She, was not only unable to find a partner, but is also unable to use her own power! I win! I win! Today, Riko can finally be called Riko! Aha, ahaha, ahahahaha!"

Riko, who had started laughing again for some reason, used her hair to pick Aria up.

That hair appears to be extremely strong. Against all expectation, it was able to pick Aria up easily--and throw it to me, like a rag doll.

"Aria...Aria!"

Aria's face was stained with blood, and she was closing her eyes tightly, but even now, she hadn't loosened her grip on her guns.

This is too abnormal...

She is a monster.

I must escape from here with Aria!

Riko's raucous laughter came at me from behind.

"AHAHAHAHA!--Hey, in this restrictive plane, where do you think you're going to escape?"

It had been a long time since I had last done this...but, I carried Aria princess style--right now, she was pitifully light.

When people are moving, they feel heavier than they actually are.

And right now, Aria was unconscious, unmoving.

I escaped back into the compartment, and lightly laid Aria on the bed.

I used the towel inside the room to wipe away the blood on her face.

"Uu..."

On the moaning Aria's temple, was a deep gash.

This isn't good--the artery is cut.

This artery isn't as serious as the carotid artery, but if the blood isn't stopped, this won't end well!

"Hold on...you're going to be fine!"

I hurriedly yanked the blood-stopping bandage out of the Butei toolkit, and applied it to the wound. However, the blood-stopping bandage only helps by forcing the blood inside using a special medical cream. It can only be used as a temporary measure.

Aria didn't seem to know the seriousness of the situation, and she smiled at me weakly.

"Aria!"

I quickly reached my fingers into the pocket in the Butei toolkit meant for pens. From inside, I drew out a small syringe marked with 'Razzo'.

"I'm going to inject you! You're not allergic, right!?"

"Not...allergic..."

Razzo-a compound of Epinephrine and Morphine. It acts as an adrenaline rush and anesthesia, a drug meant to bring a comrade back to life.

"Razzo must be injected directly into the heart. Do you understand? This is all that's left."

After I warned her, I let Aria lie flat on the bed,
and reached my hand towards the chest of her sailor uniform.

"If...if you dare to mess around...I'll...make...a hole..."

"Alright, promise me that you'll recover enough to make a hole in me!"

I pulled the zip of the uniform down furiously, splitting it down the middle.

"Uu..."

Aria started shivering.

The bra, decorated with poker suits, was right before my eyes.

She had creamy white skin. There was only one piece of cloth left to protect, those cute, feminine breasts.

Kathump. My heart started beating furiously.

Thinking about that in a time like this, you really are a bastard, Kinji.

But, ahh, you bastard. Why is it that everything about her is so cute.

"Aria...!"

I called her name, putting my trembling hand onto her creamy white skin.

I slid my hand over her body, looking for her heartbeat.

Two fingers upwards from here, is her heart. It was extremely close to her bra.

"Ki-Kinji..."

"Don't move."

"I...I'm scared..."

Hearing that trembling voice, I quickly removed the cap of the syringe.

"Aria, can you hear me!? I'm going to inject you now!"

Aria didn't answer.

There was no response at all.

Her heartbeat-

stopped.

ARIA!

"--COME BACK TO ME!!!"

Chi--!

I plunged the needle into her chest.

If I hesitate, it will fail. So all I could do is forcefully inject the drug into Aria's heart, without a second thought.

"--!"

twitch, Aria spasmed.

The enormous effect of the drug contorted her face.

But I felt that her appearance now, was more precious to me than at any other moment.

She's alive. She's come back to life. This is real.

"Uu...!"

Aria sucked in a huge mouthful of air, her small mouth wide open, trembling.

How is she...? I looked at her nervously.

The revived Aria's pale skin began to be flushed with blood again, and her breathing continued to grow stronger.

"--Haaa!"

Thump!

She sat up, rigidly, just like in a zombie movie.

"Hu...Huh!?...Th-thi-thi-this! What! M-my br-breasts!"

It appears that the effect of the drug was too strong, and it confused her memory.

"Kin-Kinji! It's you again, isn't it! You...Why do you want to see this kind of chest! Do you want to make fun of me! An-anyways! My chest is small! I don't care! It won't grow! Ever! Even after 10000 years! My chest! And height! It will stay at 1.42m!"

The confused Aria was so embarrassed that her whole body was red, and she was clutching at the chest of her uniform. However, she immediately realized that the syringe was still stuck into her chest.

"Kyaa!"

She let out a scream that was totally unlike a beautiful high school girl like her, and yanked out the syringe.

"Th-that's why, Aria! You were defeated by Riko, so I gave you Razzo--"

"Riko...Riko--!!"

Aria fixed up her uniform, jerkily. She grabbed her guns on the bed, and stood up, a ferocious expression on her face, as she prepared to stagger out of the room.

--This isn't good.

Razzo is a revival drug, but it's also...a heavy stimulant.

It could be that her body was very sensitive to the drug, but she had lost all reason.

She's in no condition to approach Riko for a deciding match--!

"Aria, wait! Even when you were in top condition, you were unable to beat Riko!"

I barred the door with my body, and grabbed Aria's guns.

"I don't care! Let-go-off-me! You piece of trash, go cower at one side!"

Aria, grabbed by me, bared those fang-like canines, and shouted that.

"Be-be quiet, Aria! If Riko hears this, she'll know that we're together in a room, yet unable to even work together!"

"It doesn't matter! I'm an [Aria] anyways! I'll finish Riko by myself! And anyways, you have no right to lecture me!"

Aria's camellia eyes stared towards me, wet from over-stimulation.

We're finished. How am I supposed to stay calm?

"Besides, you hate me, don't you!? You said you did! When we went to Omi! Before we went to look for the cat! I remember very clearly!"

Aah, what must I do to get her to shut up?

I have to find a way to stay quiet somehow. However, my hands, grabbing her guns, are in no position to let go. Because I know, if I dare to take my hands off her guns, she will blow me out the door with one bullet.

--A way to solve this situation--

...It's not impossible...

I have to strike directly at Aria's weakness.

But if I do that, then I--

will without a doubt, enter Hysteria Mode.

I will enter Hysteria Mode, so full of bitter memories, and also the cause of my brother's death.

I will go into that mode which I don't want anyone...especially girls to see. I will become, the one thing that I hate most of all, my other self.

But....but!

Right now, it's the only option!

If this continues, Riko will definitely find us. No, she might be in front of the door already.

If she hears us fighting, she'll definitely feel that it'll be easy to take care of us, and she'll break in.

And this...I'm afraid it will come true.

Not only me, who has lost his gun, but Aria too--we will be killed--!

"I remember very clearly! You said 'I hate you more than you know'! For me, who had already chosen you as my partner, to be 'Hated'--at that time, Although I appeared to be very calm--my heart...was hurting...a lot--"

Aaahhh, Aria.

--Forgive me!

"But that doesn't matter! Since you hate me, then you don't need to care about me! Since you hate--"

While Aria was still screaming, I sealed her lips.

With my own.

"--!!!"

Aria was stunned.

This girl, who was completely inept with anything to do with love, under my furious kiss--

As I thought, was completely rigid.

She not only shut up, it was as if her whole body, from her head to her fingertips, had turned to stone.

Ahh, but this is a double-edged sword.

Aria's lips, so akin to a cherry blossom, were so small, so soft...it was extremely clear to me. Her lips, which burned my lips on contact, were like a wild fire, and the heat engulfed my body in a moment.

--Kathump.

I felt as if I was expanding. Pain shot through my body, as if I were going to be torn in half.

A furious, unstoppable heat shot out from the center of my body.

--It was amazing. Such a furious Hysteria Mode...this was the first time I had experienced such a thing since I was born...!

--Fuaah!

Our lips parted, and we both sucked in air.

Because both of us were frozen, it was an extremely long kiss.

"Aria...forgive me. That...was all I could do."

"...You...yo-you...ahh..."

Aria trembled, and she sat on the bed, unsteady.

"Ki-Ki-Kinji, you idiot...! At this sort of time...wh-wh-what do you think you're doing...! Th-th-that was m-my...first kiss...!"

For a moment, I thought she was going to start shouting again, but it looks like I was wrong.

Her voice was powerless, hoarse.

"Don't worry, it was my first as well."

"You idiot...!!-I'll have you take responsibility...!"

Aria, with tears in her eyes, looked up at me, howled, like a trembling animal.

The me in Hysteria Mode, bent down, and knelt before her.

"Fine, I will take responsibility. However--first, let's finish this."

"...Kinji...! Could it be that, you..."

I think she noticed that my voice was more calm and deep than just now.

Aria seemed to have thought back to the bike-jacking incident, and her eyes opened wide.

I lightly touched my mouth to the side of her head that was untouched, and whispered

"Butei Law article 1. 「Believe in your comrades and help each other」. I, trust Aria implicitly. So, trust me as well, and let me be the bait. Understand? Together, we will bring down the 'Butei Killer'."

"It's time for the Bad Ending. Kufufu. Kufufu."

Riko, who had prepared the key sometime beforehand, unlocked the door.

Afterward, she used that hand-like hair, still holding a dagger, to push open the door, and held up her guns, laughing and saying,

"I thought that you would kill each other off, you know? I was waiting for it. But since it seems that isn't the case, Riko will make her appearance. Ah..."

She must have noticed that I, as if I was another person, was extremely calm.

Riko appeared to be delighted, and she tapped the guns in her hands to the daggers in her hair.

"Aha! What did you do with Aria? I never thought that you'd be able to do it in this sort of situation. Kufufu."

This person...

does she know my trigger to Hysteria Mode?

"Then? where's Aria? She isn't dead, is she?"

Riko's daggers, curled up in her hair, gestured towards the bed.

On the bed were the blankets and cushions I had piled up. It looked like a body from outside.

"I don't know."

I said, my eyes flickering to the bathroom, Riko's gaze followed mine.

"Ah...right now, Kinji is really awesome. It's really moving. I might just go with the flow and kill you as well."

"You might as well do it. Otherwise, you are the one who'll be killed."

Riko frowned and pointed her gun at me.

"--Awesome! I love you, Kinji. Show me the power of Holmes' partner."

As she was about to pull the trigger, I used the emergency oxygen bottles by the bed as a shield, holding them in front of me.

"--!"

If she dares to shoot, they'll explode.

Sending both Riko and I to oblivion.

Riko, understanding the situation perfectly, stayed her hand for a moment.

But that one moment was enough.

I threw the bottles at her, and charged in with all my force.

As long as I can get within her guard, I can use my heightened abilities to defeat her.

Flick! With a noise, I flicked open the butterfly knife in my hand.

"--!"

In the moment that Riko stood there, frowning.

Fuah!

"Ku!?"

The plane seemed to have hit something, and it shook.

This stroke of misfortune was something that even I, in Hysteria Mode, was unable to predict.

I, who had lost balance because of the large shift in gravity--saw Riko smiling in the midst of the tilting room, raising her Walther, aimed at my head.

And.

--!

I saw the bullet exit out of the barrel, flying towards me.

Ah. I won't be able to dodge. I can't dive left or right.

This is an unavoidable attack.

Then I'll--!!

RIIIPP---!

I used my knife--

to split the bullet.

...this movement, surprised even me.

My Hysteria Mode is really amazing, this time.

Splitting the bullet...Truthfully, there was only about a 50% chance of success.

At that moment, the sound of the two halves of the bullet entering the back wall reached my ears.

And when Riko stood there, her eyes wide with shock, I drew the black Colt that I had borrowed from Aria, and pointed it at her.

"Don't move!"

"I'll kill Aria!"

During the time when Riko appeared to have decided that she would be unable to match my draw, and pointed her gun at the shower.

Bang!

Aria, who had been hiding in the hand luggage compartment the whole time, burst out and rushed downwards, raising the silver Colt in her hand--

Bang Bang!!

and cleanly shot the gun out of Riko's hand.

"!!"

Aria, still in the air, threw down her gun, and drew her two wakizashi while descending like a meteor,

--Kyaa!"

and she cut both strands of Riko's hair, which was in the process of holding up her own daggers.

Clank, Clank.

That tea colored hair fell to the floor, along with the daggers they grasped.

"Uu--!!"

Riko held her hands to her head, and for the first time, uttered a panicked sound.

Shi. Aria fluidly sheathed her blades and smoothly picked up the gun she dropped.

"Mine Riko Lupin the 4th--" "--I am taking you into custody for attempted murder!"

and Riko, against all expectations, laughed and smiled, beaming at Aria and I.

"So, that's how it was. The shower and the bed were both decoys. And the real Aria took advantage of her small size, and hid inside the luggage compartment...Amazing. If the two of you weren't in sync, you would have never been able to pull off a double decoy like this."

"Although it was against my wishes, we were living together, it would be difficult if we didn't have any mutual agreements."

"You two can be proud. This is the first time that Riko has been forced into this kind of situation."

"I'm sorry, this is already checkmate."

"Idiot."

Riko said viciously, all her hair suddenly swept up.

That strange sight slowed my reactions for a moment.

Inside her hair...what is she controlling!?

"Stop it! What are you planning!"

Taking in this scene, I charged over, trying to restrain Riko.

In that moment--

Bang!

The plane swayed again, and started diving--!

Aria, losing her balance, smacked into the wall.

And I did all I could just to stay upright.

"Bye bye, Ki-kun."

The next moment, Riko rushed out of the compartment, just like an escaping rabbit.

I was still puzzling over how the plane always seemed to shake just when Riko needed it. Then I realized that Riko had hid a control device in her hair, and was using it to control the plane from afar.

Flight ANA600 was diving through the typhoon with terrifying speed.

What is she trying to do, lowering the altitude by so much?

I could hear the other passengers running through the corridors and down the stairs, in panic.

And I saw Riko standing at a corner of the bar, her back facing the windows of the plane.

"In this restrictive plane, where are you going to escape, squirrel?"

I raised the Colt, returning the words that Riko had said to me just now.

"Hmph. Kinji. It would be better if you didn't approach me, OK?"

Riko said, laughing.

Stuck to the wall of the cabin, was something like clay--probably explosives--by her side.

"You should know by now, the 'Butei Killer' uses bombs."

Riko, seeing me stop in my tracks, pulled up her skirt and curtsied towards me, her smile full of daggers.

"Hey, Kinji. Are you willing to come to Heaven on Earth--I-U? If it's just you, I can bring you there. In I-U--"

said Riko, her gaze sharp.

"--you brother is there too, you know?"

That bastard, she dares to play with his name even now.

"Don't...provoke me any longer. Do you understand, Riko. If you say one more sentence about my brother, I might just break article 9 in anger. Both of us wouldn't like to see that, would we?"

Butei Law article 9.

「Regardless of the situation, a Butei cannot kill」.

"Ah. That's not very fun. Kinji has to continue being a Butei, after all."

said Riko, winking at me, hugging her arms to herself.

"Then, tell Aria for me--We welcome both of you at any time, OK?"

Bang--!!!

The explosives behind her exploded!

"--!"

A round hole was left in the wall of the plane.

Riko jumped out from it. She wasn't wearing a parachute!

"Ri..."

I was going to yell, Riko! But I couldn't make a sound.

The air inside the plane started to be violently sucked outwards.

At that moment, the inflatable vests, and the emergency oxygen masks tumbled down from the top in an avalanche.

Everything inside the bar was being sucked out by that hole.

Paper, cloth. Cups, bottles, and me.

"--!"

I immediately grabbed hold of a stool that was affixed to the floor. At that moment, the emergency sprinklers and silica gel boards were released. The viscous silica gel boards bumped into each other in the air, and stuck together, forming something akin to a spiderweb, blocking the hole that Riko had made.

Finally safe, I peeked out a nearby window.

In the faint moonlight, far away--

I could see Riko spinning, seemingly dancing in the air.

Thump.

Riko pulled on the bow on her back, and her fabric-heavy clothing became a parachute.

The last thing I saw, was Riko, in just her underwear, waving at me from within the clouds. So, the reason she brought the plane to such a low altitude was so she could escape.

"--!?"

Suddenly, there were two extremely fast points of light, passing by Riko's body, and passing through the cloud layer, speeding towards the plane.

In Hysteria Mode, I was just able to see their trail.

--This.

How is this possible.

--Missiles--!?

Bang-----!!

Along with the explosion came the largest shudder yet, reverberating throughout flight ANA600.

This was different from wind shear or lightning, the plane felt like it had been smashed with two gigantic hammers.

"--!"

I clutched onto the windows for dear life, praying, as I looked upon the wing.

Flight ANA600--has been struck by something right out of a nightmare.

Of the 4 engines under the wings, the two inner engines were damaged, but the other two were fine for now.

The two wings off the airplane blew out thick smoke, just like blood, but continued to fly...barely.

I still felt a little shell-shocked by that sudden impact.

But I have to head to the cockpit immediately.

Although we managed to go through that attack, Flight ANA600 is still in the middle of its endless descent.

The pilot and co-pilot were lying on the floor, still unconscious due to the effect of Riko's tranquilizers.

"--you're late!"

Aria yelled at me, turning her head as I entered. She seemed to have taken the IC Keycard from the bodies of the pilot and co-pilot.

A strange device, extremely similar to the guns on the Segways, was on the floor next to my feet. It seems that Aria had pulled it off. Riko had used the remote in her hair to control this device...well now, the remains of this device from afar.

Aria's small body was sitting inside the wide pilot's seat, hands on the disc-like controls.

"Aria--do you know how to fly this?"

"I can fly a Cessna. I've never flown a jet airplane though."

said Aria, in a voice meant to calm others down. She pulled on the controls furiously.

As if responding to her movements, Flight ANA600 finally leveled off.

"However, I'm able to fly left, right, up and down."

"Can you land?"

"No."

"--that so?"

I understand that the plane is back to normal now.

And I can, through the rainstorm, see that that we're approaching the ocean very soon.

Our altitude is around...300m. This is extremely dangerous.

I sat in the other seat, found a radio, and changed the settings from transmitting to receiving.

"--31--Receive. Repeat, this is Haneda Airport Control Tower. Flight ANA600, please use the emergency-communication-frequency 127-631 to answer. Repeat, 127-631. Receive."

Hearing the call, I set the frequency, and changed the settings back to transmit.

"--This is flight 600. The aircraft was just hijacked, but we have regained control. The pilot and co-pilot are out of commission. Right now, there are two Butei piloting the aircraft. I am Tohyama Kinji. The other is Kanzaki H. Aria."

My voice made the person in Haneda Airport Control Tower yelp in surprise.

Alright. The first thing to do is maintain communication with the control tower.

I used my left hand to control the satellite phone I had taken from the belt of the pilot. Satellite phones are very similar to normal phones, however

they're normally used on freight ships etc., and it works through bouncing a signal off a satellite, so it's able to connect to anywhere around the world.

When I was dialing, I connected the phone to the radio through bluetooth.

Right now, I'm still in Hysteria Mode. So I'm able to make accurate and well-thought out decisions easily.

"Who are you calling?"

Aria asked, and at that moment, a new voice came from the radio.

"Hello?"

"Muto, it's me. I'm sorry for calling you with a weird number."

"Ki-Kinji!? Where are you!? Your girlfriend's in trouble!"

"She isn't my girlfriend, but Aria is with me right now."

Muto Goki. Logi's ace.

I never thought that that a friend like him would ever be useful.

"Wa...hey! What are you doing...!"

"Gi...gi-gi!?"

Aria started stammering because she was called my girlfriend, and she once again exhibited her talent in blushing.

Seeing as she was about to burst out with complaints, I put my index finger on her lips.

"...!"

Aria's face became more and more red, but she stayed silent.

"Muto. It looks like you've heard about the plane hijacking as well. Was it broadcast?"

"It's been breaking news since this morning. I think the passengers on the plane called from inside. Connect immediately got their hands on a list of names. Because Aria's name was on that list, everybody's been gathering in the classroom."

I clearly explained the situation to Haneda Control Tower and Muto. I told them that we were hijacked, and that the culprit has escaped. Afterward, we were hit by missiles, and we lost two engines.

"...Flight ANA600, don't worry. The Boeing 737-350 is the result of cutting-edge technology, even if it's hit by 2 missiles, it should be able to fly normally, no matter how bad the weather is, that point won't change."

The voice coming from Haneda Control Tower led Aria to breathe a sigh of relief.

"Kinji, concentrate on this first. You said that it's the inner engines that are damaged, right? Tell me the fuel statistics immediately. EICAS--slightly above the center should be a rectangular screen. At the bottom of the 2 rows and 4 columns of instruments, there should be 3 gauges with Fuel written on them. Tell me the number of the one with Total on it."

As expected of a transportation otaku. Muto spoke as if the HUD was right in front of him.

"The number--right now it's 540. However, it's continuing to decrease, it's 535 now."

Muto, hearing my answer, yelped.

"Fuck...there's a huge leak."

"A fuel leak...? Te-tell me how to stop it!"

Aria called out in a panicked voice, after a while--

"There's no way. Simply put, the Boeing 737-350 inner engines have a fuel valve. If that is broken, there's no way to stop it from leaking."

"Ho-how long can we fly for?"

"Without even talking about the remaining fuel, the speed of the leak is too quick. I guess...around 15 minutes."

"...As expected of the product of cutting-edge technology."

I angrily complained to Haneda Control Tower.

"Kinji, I just asked Connect, you were probably circling over Sagami Bay, all this time. Right now, you have to return to Haneda Airport immediately,

over Uraga Channel. Seeing as how much time you have left, this is the only solution."

"I was going to do that anyways."

replied Aria to Muto's words.

"...ANA600, how will you fly? Do not deactivate auto-pilot, at any cost."

"The autopilot function has been damaged. I'm the one piloting the aircraft."

Aria's eyes gestured towards the HUD, the light labeled Autopilot was flashing and emitting a continuous beep.

Although I don't really get what she's saying, I'll play along for now.

"That's right, we're hoping that you can tell us how to land."

I asked Haneda,

"...this isn't something that an amateur can learn immediately...however, we're contacting other aircraft in the area. We're trying to find a pilot that's experienced with that model of aircraft."

"We don't have time. I want you to connect the frequencies of all the aircraft in the area. Can you do it?"

"Ah, I...can do it...but what are you going to do?"

"I want them to teach me how to land all at once. You can help too, Muto."

"...together? Kinji, you aren't **Prince Shotoku** you know...!" (able to listen to his 12 officials at once.)

"The me right now, can do it. Can you start immediately? We don't have any time left."

I knew that Aria was looking at me in amazement.

I turned my head to face Aria, who was just about to say something, and shot a glance at her, telling her to stay silent, and returned my gaze to the front.

Below the cloud layer--Over the black seas, and through the raging storm, I could see the lights of Greater Tokyo.

We were flying straight towards it.

I listened to the 11 voices at once, and immediately grasped the method of landing.

I was reading the altimeter right now.

Our altitude was 1000 feet--around 300 meters.

Although this was an extremely dangerous altitude, for us, who only had 10 minutes of flight time left, we couldn't waste even one drop of fuel, so we had no way of ascending even 1 meter.

As we were flying over Yokosuka--

"Flight ANA600, This is the Jieitai, JSDF."

After hearing a rough voice come from the radio linked to Haneda Control Tower, we both looked down.

Jieitai...?

"We can't allow you to use Haneda Airport. The runway has already been locked down."

"What did you say?"

The person who shouted out was not Aria nor I, but Muto.

"Who is that."

"Muto Goki, Butei! Flight 600 has a fuel leak! They can only fly for 10 minutes! They can't fly to any other replacement airport, they can only land at Haneda!"

"Butei Muto Goki. Yelling is no use. We have received orders from the Defense Minister."

--I looked out the plane uneasily.

And Aria, who looked out the window with me, breathed sharply.

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force's airplanes--the F-15J Eagle--were on either side of ANA600.

"Hey you, from Jieitai. Why am I seeing your buddies out here next to me?"

"...those are observation aircraft. We hope that you follow our instructions, and fly towards Chiba. They will observe you till you've landed safely."

Aria, following his instructions, nudged the controls to the right--preparing to face towards the ocean.

I cut the connection with Haneda, and put my hand over Aria's.

"...don't go over the Sea, Aria. He's tricking us."

"?"

"The Jieitai doesn't think we can land safely. They want to shoot us down when we're safely above the ocean."

"Ho-how can they...! This airplane has civilians on it!?"

"If we crash into Tokyo, then there will be even larger losses. So they have to take the lesser of two evils."

I squeezed Aria's hand, and pushed the controls left--turning the airplane towards Yokohama.

"Kin...Kinji?"

Aria's fingers stiffened, she was obviously ill at ease...as if seeking reassurance, she turned towards me.

"Since they want to kill us, we'll have to take some hostages. Aria, fly over Tokyo."

Flight ANA600 went through Yokohama, and entered Tokyo.

We had enough fuel to last 7 minutes.

"Where do you want to land, Kinji? There are no runways in Tokyo."

"Muto. How long does a runway have to be?"

"If it's a Boeing 737-350 with two engines...around 2450 meters."

"...Do you know the wind speed over there?"

"Wind speed? Reki, what's the wind speed around Academy Island?"

"From what I can sense, in 5 minutes there will be a southeasterly wind, at 41.02 meters."

The voice of Reki, from Snipe, came over the radio.

"Then Muto. If we land with a 41 meters headwind, how long does the runway need to be?"

"...That...around 2050 meters."

"...It will be close."

Hearing my soft words, Muto and Aria fell silent.

"Wh-where are you going to land? Tokyo doesn't have a runway like that."

"Do you remember what the artificial island Butei High is on, looks like? It's 2 kilometers from North to South, and 500 meters from East to West. If we land diagonally, it will be 2060 meters."

"He-hey..."

"Don't worry, Muto. I won't crash into 'Academy Island'"

"...?"

"I'm going to go to 'Empty Island'. The one that's north of Rainbow Bridge, the artificial island just like Academy Island."

"...He-hey. Ho-how did you come up with such a risky strategy? Are you the real Kinji?"

"Haha...who's sitting here right now, Aria?"

"Wh-what?"

"Why don't you answer?"

Hey, the me in Hysteria Mode, is it really the time to start teasing Aria?

I reprimanded myself in my heart. However, Aria started showing off her expertise in blushing.

And those Eichornia eyes opened wide, as if she was about to say something.

But--she seemed to understand that I was taking the initiative this time.

And this proud ojou-sama, swiveled her head to one side with a "Hmph,"...

"Kinji."

she said, in a voice like a child unhappily surrendering to their parents.

"Yeah, it's like you heard, Muto. It's a shame, isn't it."

The nighttime view of Shibuya and Harajuku quickly swept under our plane.

We must be scaring the people in the streets.

"...The artificial island...huh. It's not impossible."

Muto said with a sigh, relaxing Aria's frozen expression.

"But, Kinji. That really is just an empty island. There are no warning lights or landmarks. No matter what plane it is, worst come to worst, they still need lights to attempt a night landing. And, the visibility is extremely low now, because of the rain, and more importantly the wind strength is rising. To attempt a landing in this situation--"

"So, Aria, would you like to give up on landing, and have a **lover's suicide** with me?"

I cut short Muto's words, and turned towards Aria.

"I-I would rather die than...have a lover's suicide with you."

Aria, noticing the paradox in her words, stuck her tongue out at me.

"Haha. That's something to be happy about, at least. This is the first time I've come to an agreement with Aria, you know?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I--don't want to have a lover's suicide either. I couldn't bear seeing Aria die."

Hearing my words, Aria said "Really~! Why did you have to say that!" and dipped her head, blushing.

"Muto, this is how it's going to be, the aircraft is starting to prepare for landing."

"Wa-wa-wa-wait, Kinji! 'Empty Island' is covered in water! You won't be able to stop with just 2050 meters!"

"I'll think of something. Trust me."

"...as...as you like! But if you dare die, I'll definitely exorcise you!"

Shouted Muto. I wasn't sure if he had gone insane, but he had started shouting in the midst of all his classmates before hanging up.

Flight ANA600 passed close by Shinjuku's high rise buildings, and started banking right.

There was still 3 minutes.

To land on a short runway, we have to reduce speed, so Flight 600 passed over Tokyo Dome at a leisurely speed that made me feel panicked. In the midst of the storm, we went from the Tokyo underground over Ginza.

"Aria. We're flying lower than Tokyo Tower right now. Make sure you don't crash into it."

"Don't underestimate me."

Aria deployed the landing gear, and transferred the controls to me.

Alright, I can see Tokyo Bay.

I should be able to see the artificial island.

--But.

The me in hysteria mode, formed a conclusion immediately.

We've survived until now...

But landing is impossible.

I couldn't see 'Empty Island' anywhere.

Muto was right, Tokyo Bay, inside Shiodome, was completely enveloped in darkness.

Without landing lights or anything else, there was no way I could land. That was all I understood.

This situation, regardless of how skilled the pilot, will not end well.

Then, we should find a place where there aren't many people and crash--while this thought appeared in my head--I'm not sure how Aria

sensed it, whether through her sixth sense or something, but she detected my change in mood, and said

"Kinji. It will be fine. You can do it. There's no way you will fail. Since you don't want to be a Butei, if you die as one, you will have lost. And,--I haven't saved mother yet!!"

While Aria was speaking...her words suddenly became like a mantra...

"We can't die yet! We can't die in this kind of place!"

Pat...pat, pat, pat....

A light suddenly appeared on 'Empty Island', right in front of the Rainbow Bridge...!

"Kinji! Can you see, you bastard!"

The line with Muto came back to life, and we could hear the pattering sound of heavy rain through it.

"Muto!?"

"If I let you die, Shira...no, people will cry for your soul! I hijacked the biggest motorboat in Logi! And everybody willingly gave up their Amdo issue flashlights! You're going to have to write disciplinary reports for all of us!"

Following his voice, a connection suddenly interrupted the one between Muto and I, two connections, three...several connections linked with ours.

"Kinji!" "We can see the plane!" "Just a little bit more!" "Come on, you can do it!"

The me in Hysteria Mode, could understand.

These voices.

It's them.

The classmates that we saved during the bus-jacking--!!

They came from Academy Island to Empty Island, and used their flashlights to act as landing lights for us!

--Butei Law article 1. 「Believe in your comrades and help each other」 --

I slowly reduced our altitude, going towards the flat surface they had prepared for me!

Bang----!!

Flight ANA600, full of determination, forced a landing onto the overflowing artificial island.

In the midst of the extreme impact, Aria deployed the thrust reversers.

"Stop, stop, stop, stop stop stop stop--!!"

I followed along with her sharp voice, chanting.

"Let's go--!"

I twisted the controls quickly, sending the aircraft into a spin.

In the midst of the rain, a 2050 meter runway won't be enough.

Exactly like Muto said.

However, I can do this.

This was the reason I chose the artificial island.

It's getting closer and closer.

It's the wind turbine,

The pillar of the wind turbine--!!

Bang----!!

One of the wings of the airplane smashed into the pillar, and we started to spin--

Aria and I, inside the cockpit, were like clothes in a washing machine--

...

"Uw...aah. Ouch..."

...the smell of...Gardenia.

Ah, right. This is Aria's scent.

I felt as if my whole body had been beaten, and opened my eyes with all my strength. Looking out the window, I could see Rainbow Bridge.

Flight ANA600--had stopped.

Although we were at the edge of death, but now, we were safe.

But...why can't I move?

I predicted this in advance...but I didn't really think that Aria's body would be wedged on top of mine on the co-pilot's seat.

Aria, who was unconscious, was straddling my waist, her arms around my body, that beautiful face on top of mine.

So, I was embraced by her again.

I looked at her chest helplessly...good. Looks like her shirt didn't go up this time.

I guess that means that I won't be killed by her.

When I had just thought that, I realized that Aria's skirt had completely flipped up.

"...!"

I quickly shut my eyes.

And, not daring to look down, I, making sure that Aria didn't notice...

used my hand, to slowly fix her skirt.

Then, this should be fine.

The top already took one of my nine lives. How could I let the bottom do so as well.

--Right?

Last Ammo: La Bambina da l'ARIA

In short, I was sent to the hospital where I slept like a log, hoping that after I woke up, I would realize that it was all a dream.

But the reality wasn't at all like what I hoped. Because I was aching all over.

On 12 spots on my body, I had gotten bruises, scratches, and sprains. This was totally unlike the hero waking up in manga or in movies.

And now--

I was standing in the balcony of my own room, looking at the nighttime skyline of Tokyo.

The one wind turbine on 'Empty Island' was a little bit bent, and directly under, the totaled Boeing 737-350.

Ah. This scene that I loved so much, was destroyed by me, in the end.

"I never thought that we'd be able to see such a starry sky in Tokyo."

"This is what it's like after a typhoon, you know."

That was Aria and I talking, below the starry sky.

First, we had to do a report for the Police, then we were interviewed by countless reporters...only now, could I finally return to my room.

But Aria, for some reason, followed me.

"Mother's...trial, was postponed."

said Aria, looking out towards Empty Island.

"The incident this time proves that the 'Butei Killer' is the guilty one...according to the lawyers, the trial may be postponed for over a year."

"Is that so?"

Although this kind of atmosphere really isn't one where I can congratulate her, I still returned a sentence.

Aria, seeing the remains of the Boeing 737-350, turned towards me.

"Hey. Why did you...chase me to the plane, to save me?"

...Why, you ask?

This kind of...

...question that I don't even know the answer to...Don't ask me this.

"...Well, I thought that since you were such an idiot, you would have no way of beating the 'Butei Killer', so I went."

"Th-that person...I could've taken care of her by myself. You're the real idiot."

"Well, that's true. I'm an idiot for saving an idiot like you."

I leaned my elbow against the railing, and said that with a sigh.

Aria lightly blinked and she said...

"I'm sorry, I was lying."

"About what?"

"When I said, I could've taken care of her by myself."

Aria sighed, and she said in a voice that I had never heard her use before,

"About that. In the sky...I, understand now. I understand why I need a 'partner'. I also understand, there are things that I can't do by myself. If you weren't there, I would definitely..."

"..."

"--So today, I came to say goodbye."

"...goodbye?"

"I still have to find a partner. I...would prefer it if you were my partner, but we had an agreement."

"An agreement?"

"We agreed that you would help me only once, remember?"

"Ah, that's right..."

Now that I think about it, we did have an agreement like that.

Until we completely solved the case of the Butei Killer.

"Butei Law article 2. You must fulfill the contract in the commission. So, I won't approach you again."

Aria said, swaying. She opened her mouth several times, but she decided against saying anything. Finally, she looked at me gravely.

"...Kinji. You're an amazing Butei. So now, I will respect your decision, and I won't...call you a slave anymore. So...if you ever change your mind...then, come find me. But remember, I will definitely have you as my..."

Aria seemed to still have hopes that I would be her partner, but I--

"...sorry."

turned my head away automatically.

I don't want to be a Butei.

And Nii-san's shadow is still--

To tell the truth, I've had enough of dangerous situations like that.

"Do-don't worry about it. Since you aren't trying to hurt me. Well see, in the end...I am an Aria. What I said just now, forget about it."

Aria, saying that, turned around. I don't know if it was because she was cold, but she strode into the room.

"--Ah! The April I spent here in Tokyo was horrible! I didn't manage to find a partner, my head was hurt, and I was unable to even grab a stuffed animal for myself!"

Looking at Aria, who was pretending that everything was fine, I thought...

I have to at least smile when sending her off, so I went back in as well and smiled.

"If...we ever meet again, I'll teach you how to grab a stuffed animal for yourself. But, a lot of that is intuition."

"What does that mean. Are you saying my intuition is bad?"

Aria put her hands on her hips and stared at me.

"If you dare look down on me, I'll make some holes in you! I'll make 10...no, I'll make you into a piece of Swiss cheese!"

She said, sticking out her tongue, laughing.

I laughed along with her.

I'm not sure what was so funny, but just like that, together, we laughed.

I escorted Aria to the door, and watched her put on her shoes.

"Ah, is it this late already?...I have to go now."

"Do you have plans already?"

"Yeah. There's someone coming to pick me up. After all that happened...the London Butei Department is sending one of their helicopters in Tokyo to pick me up."

London Butei Department.

That's where Aria works as a Butei.

"Before Mother was arrested, I was an exceptional Butei there. So everybody there wants me to come back, so I can cover for their uselessness. However...I want to take the opportunity to recover."

"Go back...to London?"

"Yeah. The helicopter will send me to a British aircraft carrier, and from there I'll take a jet fighter back."

A jet fighter... That's way over the top. As expected of nobility.

"...It would be good if you could find a partner."

"I'll definitely find one. Because of you, I know that there's one 'somewhere in the world'."

"Is that so...that's right. Goodbye. Good luck."

"Yeah. Bye bye."

Aria lightly opened the door...and went outside.

I didn't stop her.

The door, closed again.

Now...it's all over...right.

... ..

"...?"

Aria's footsteps never came.

To leave, she needs to either take the elevator or the stairs.

I thought that it was a little weird, so I looked outside through the peephole...

"...Uu...Uuu...Uu....Uuuu...."

Aria was crying in front of my door.

"I don't...Kinji, I don't...there won't be...anyone like you...there definitely...won't. I won't...be able to find anyone..."

She continued to wipe away the tears streaming down her face as she said this.

...Aria.

Why...are you crying?

Weren't you smiling just now?

Weren't you laughing, so happily?

So now.

Why are you crying...

Aria.

But in the end, I still didn't open the door.

Because I felt...if I opened it, my life would change again.

I sat down heavily on the sofa, holding my head in my hands.

I'll just pretend I never saw her tears.

If I do, everything will be solved.

That's right, Kinji. Just remember. If she's by your side, troublesome things will appear like a plague. Isn't it better if she leaves?

That's right, Kinji. Open your drawer. Take the application for leaving Butei High. That's right. Good job. It's been too hectic to hand it in recently, but you should go put it in the inbox at Masters now.

If you do, you'll be able to enter a normal school, and go to a normal university. You can be a salaryman, and you can live that normal life you've always wanted.

The...more I thought like this...

Aria grew...in my head...and in my heart.

Aria. Aria. She appeared in my life like a typhoon, and messed up my life. And now, she leaves, exactly like she came. A gust of wind.

...What is she?

I thought that if she left, I'd be at peace...

But why do I feel so empty.

Is it that small, cute girl's tears that are holding me captive? That's not possible.

The leopon on my cellphone--I don't know why, but it seemed as if it was crying.

"Damn it. Kinji...what are you thinking. Stop, stop!"

I screamed at myself.

I had thought this many times before...that reckless and fearless Aria, was a girl exactly like a lion cub.

But, she isn't a lion.

She's just a...lost kitten.

One that left home, and doesn't know where to go. It doesn't know who its friends are. It fights with crows and dogs until it's full of wounds. In the end, it still doesn't know what to do. It can only hide in a trash can by the river and yelp...

That...kitten.

"Aria..."

I tightly gripped the leopon attached to my cellphone.

If Aria wants to save her mother--Kanae-san, the 'Butei Killer' won't be her only enemy. She will have to fight a crowd of them.

In this world, as filthy as a trash can, she will have to fight, and fight, and fight until she is covered in blood from head to toe...Aria.

Is this really all right?

Until the last, she still calls herself an Aria.

Aria, is that really all right?

The inexperienced you, the one that the Holmes family looks on as a defect--

Do you really think that it's fine to be an Aria!?

"Of course it isn't fine. You yourself know, Kinji."

I am--the same as her, a defect of the Tohyama.

So there's no way I could be an ally of justice.

But...but.

--If I only need to be her ally, I can do it.

I sucked in a mouthful of air.

The room still had traces of Aria's scent.

The one like Gardenia...that sweet, sweet, sweet scent.

"It's so sweet...so innocent. Kinji, you really are a...naive bastard! Fuck!"

Shouting at myself, with a ripping noise, I tore the application in two.

Aria had left my room for over half an hour already.

There are no buses this late. My bicycle was blown to pieces. So I could only run, like the bastard that I was, running towards the helipad at Butei High's girl's dormitory.

The helicopter was on the roof.

The rotors were turning, giving me the feeling that it was about to take off.

And even worse, the elevator was going up.

I flew up the stairs, trying to make it to the roof.

Running all the way from the boy's dormitory at the southern tip of the island, to the girl's dormitory, at the northern tip of the island, and then continuing to run upwards...my heart was about to explode.

She really knows how to get to me.

My whole body dripping with sweat, already out of breath, I struggled to breathe through the strong wind.

But, I have to stop her.

I have to stop her.

I hate Butei. I hate Butei High. I hate girls. I hate Hysteria Mode. That still hadn't changed.

But, more than that, I...hate that I've become a piece of trash that can't even stop Aria's tears!

To change schools, there is still half a year left. The application that I had torn up, could still be rewritten.

But, well, right now, I just have to--

I just have to run a little more!

Bang!

When I threw open the door--I was too late--the helicopter had already risen off the roof about 10 meters, with a howl.

"ARIA!!"

I yelled.

My mind was completely blank.

YELL!

"ARIA! ARIA!!"

I couldn't breathe.

Yet I continued to shout with all I had.

I shouted with everything that I had, I roared!

"ARIAAAA!!"

The enormous wind pressure from the helicopter's rotors messed up my hair.

My shirt, my pants were almost ripping from the enormous pressure.

The sound of the helicopter probably overshadows mine.

Even though that's the case, I still have to shout!

--ARIA! ARIA! ARIA--!

Slam!

The door of the helicopter burst open with surprising momentum.

"Kinji you idiot! You're late!"



Aria stuck her head out, and like that she--!

hooked her cable to the side of the helicopter, and jumped down in the midst of the heavy wind!

"You....wait!"

Although there's a cable slowing her down, Aria's speed was almost exactly like in freefall.

I'm not sure whether it was because the pilot, shocked, had made a mistake, but the helicopter shook...Aria swung like a pendulum.

"--U? Uwaah!? Kyaaa!?"

"....Ah, Hey! Wa...!"

To catch Aria, I continued to back up, and with a *Clink!* I smashed into the fence on the roof.

And at that moment, Aria cut the cable and rushed down towards me--

--Do you think that girls should really fall from the sky?--

--When my face had gone pale.

"--!"

CHIII----!

The impact of me catching Aria bent the fence behind me.

We staggered back onto the roof from the, now, trampoline-like fence.

Phew. If we were unlucky, we would have fallen off the roof.

"You....you!"

"Aria! What are you doing!"

Following my call, a foreigner called up from the helicopter.

That was probably one of the members of the London Butei Section.

"Kuuuh"

Aria, whose twin tails had been completely messed up by the wind pressure, made a face at the helicopter.

...They were provoked by this, weren't they?

Several Butei deployed their cables and dropped to the roof.

London Butei Section. They want to bring Aria away. They want to bring her back to England as their tool.

So when Aria, who said she'd go back with them, tries to escape, they'll obviously be extremely confused.

Although that's the case...the situation is still extremely bad.

They have too many people. At this rate, Aria will still be brought away.

I have to think of something...!

But, I, who isn't in Hysteria Mode right now, can't really...

No, I have to. Don't make excuses. I have to find something that I can do while not in Hysteria Mode!

"Aria."

"What?"

"Do they still have cables?"

"Only the ones they are using to come down. There were none inside the helicopter."

said Aria, holding up her guns.

"Don't fire, Aria. They're foreigners. If you hurt them, things will get a lot more complicated."

"...then what do we do?"

Now that you say that...

I determinedly ran towards the exit of the roof.

Clink Clank! Two guns, the new Berettas, broke the lock.

Good, I'm fine if you break it. They won't be able to get away from here now.

"Wh-why did you seal our only exit!"

I chuckled, turning my head towards the angry Aria.

My expression must have been pretty bad reassurance.

"I'm sorry Aria. The me right now, can only do this."

"?"

"You...because of me, jumped off here."

That was when I was getting bike-jacked by the 'Butei Killer'.

Aria.

For me, you jumped off the roof of the girl's dormitory.

You jumped for me.

"Aria. The me right now, who can't do anything, is the real me."

"...?"

"--But as thanks for saving my life, the me right now can still do this!"

Come Aria!

Do you realize it now!

If you want a piece of trash like me as your partner, we're going to have to blunder our way like this!

I ran towards the fence, which had changed shape.

"Kinji!?"

Aria followed me.

"Aria! You're an Aria! That's right! That's the way it is! But!"

I used the trampoline-like fence as a...trampoline.

"I'll be your background music!!"

I yelled--

As if jumping up to grasp that full moon, I soared.

--How is it?

I'm awesome, right?

Right now, how did we get into this situation?

The cable in my belt that I had hooked to the fence, slowed my falling speed.

Aria, wearing a beautiful dress, jumped with me, and we held each other in the air--

Bounce!

Aria and I fell onto the plastic greenhouse below.

I thought that the plastic would act like rubber and redirect our energy, but with a *Crack!* we caved through the roof.

"...Ow...Ouch..."

"Ki...Kinji you idiot...!"

I really did blunder through this.

Just like in manga, Aria and I were seeing stars.

Aria stood up unsteadily and said,

"Wh-what was that! Are you in Idiot Kinji Mode...?"

Hearing that, my face twitched. Although she doesn't seem to completely know, but it seems that another person knows my secret.

The searchlight on the helicopter shone on the greenhouse.

That circular light caught us in it's brilliant beam.

Exactly like in an opera.

"Kinji."

Aria's camellia eyes looked at me.

Sitting on the floor, I looked up at Aria.

"You, through some conditions, are able to activate some special power to raise your abilities."

"..."

"I'm not really sure what those conditions are. You're unable to control this power yourself."

"..."

"But, I was thinking. Since that's the way it is, I'll teach you to be able to use it at any time! That's right! It should be simple! Right!?"

"Wa...! Physically...it might be possible, but morally, no way!"

"Real men should only speak 2 sentences!"

"I've hardly even said one!"

"Shut up, shut up! You are going to be my partner, the partner of a 'H' as great as my great-grandfather! This is already decided!"

"Wh...what is that 'H'--!"

"You still don't understand!? I can't believe this! Idiot, idiot! You big idiot! You're in the Guinness World Records for idiocy! You're the general of all idiots!"

Hey...that's kind of over the top.

"Aaah, really! Since you've decided to be my partner, then I'll tell you my name!"

Aria said, her hands on her hips, thrusting forward her eternally flat chest. She then announced,

"Kanzaki Holmes Aria!"

"Hol-mes...!?"

"That's right! I am Sherlock Holmes the 4th! So, you have already been chosen as my partner, J. H. Watson! I won't let you escape! If you dare run away again--"

Wait, wait.

Wait a second!

"--I'll make a hole in you!!"

Epilogue

Sherlock Holmes.

A famous English detective from 100 years ago. Master of both arms and martial arts.

While Riko is a descendant of the phantom thief Lupin--- Riko Mine Lupin the 4th.

Both their ancestors fought a decisive battle before in France.

The fight ended up in a draw... and passing down the enmity towards each other to their descendants... These facts are all according to what was written in the Inquesta textbook.

And it seems Holmes is pronounced as 'Olmes' in French tongue.

So that's what it is.

But even so...

A girl hooked on peach buns, that points her handguns at every little thing, or runs amok with her kodachi.

There's no possible way...

An adorable mini-sized Holmes like this could be his descendant!

I could only emptily shout my grievance inside. Aria stays at my home as a freeloader under the objective of ferreting out the trigger behind my super ability.

When I protested cohabiting with her, she just retorted: "The case about the Butei Killer isn't over until we apprehend Riko."

Hey Aria, that's what people call a far-fetched argument.

That said, I also agree with Aria that Riko is still alive. Furthermore, there are still plenty of things that I want to ask from her, like what her relationship to Nii-san was, the thing about I-U and all that stuff. The one who shot down the ANA 600 airplane with missiles is also a big mystery.

It's hard to conclude that this case is already settled.

I sealed those doubts inside my heart.

One night when I was arguing with Aria over which one of the two---peach buns or eel buns---is better...

The cellphone stuck inside my pocket had sounded a message alert, informing me of received mails.

The signal reception around this area is somehow poor... and there are certain occasions that I receive mails in waves.

I can't help but gawk when I looked at the screen display.

Unread Mail(s): 49

Voice Mail(s): 18

All of them from one source---Shirayuki.

The first message says...

"Kin-chan, is it true you're living with a girl?"

And the successive mails...

"I just came back from training camp and I heard a rumor that Kin-chan had been tricked by a girl named Aria H. Kanzaki!"

"Why aren't you giving me a reply?"

"I will head there right away!"

It seems in under 30 minutes, Shirayuki's mails had gradually evolved into something scary.

"A-Aria... R-R-RU-RURURUN AWAY!!"

"W-What!? What is it all of a sudden? And why are you trembling!? Stop that Kinji, you're creeping me out..."

"A...An...An Armed Miko is... BY THE GODS! SHE'S ALREADY HERE!?"

Dododododo

Footsteps, like a bull is charging towards this way, echoed in the hall outside my apartment.

The sound is getting closer.

Shakin!!

Together with the sound of cutting metal, the entrance door was cut in half like a joke.

In there stood a girl clad in a Shrine Maiden outfit and a white bandanna on the head. Her name is...

"Shirayuki!"

She has both fists on her sides.



Probably due to hotfooting it down here, she was short of breath and panting. Her eyebrows were shooting upwards under her front hair.

"As I thought... You're here!! KANZAKI! H! ARIA!!"

"H-Hold up! Shirayuki! Calm down!"

"Kin-chan has done nothing wrong! Kin-chan was just being tricked!"

I've been wondering all my life what presses her berserk button to turn her into this state. But whenever she does, Shirayuki turns into a berserker demigod like this.

And most of the time, the victims were people involved with me... particularly, girls. Her victims taste her wrath without knowing the reason why they are beaten up mercilessly.

"You fox demon! T-The sin for deceiving Kin-chan and defiling his chastity shall be atoned with your life!!"

Shirayuki brandished her Japanese sword upwards. The blade glittered a bluish-tint light.

Even Aria couldn't help but feel perplexed by the current situation, she was so shocked that it didn't occur to her to pull out her guns.

"S-Stop it Shirayuki! I didn't get defiled at all or anything!"

"Step aside Kin-chan! Or else I can't kill that girl!"

"K-Kinjii! Do something about this! W-What the hell is all this chaos!?"

What the hell, you asked?

THAT'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO KNOW TOO, DAMMIT!!



初めまして、挿絵を
描かせていただきました
こぶいちと申します。
今回は可愛いキャラを
たくさん描けて楽しかったです！
アリア可愛いよアリア。

ももまんアリアを
描いてみたものの
ゴスロリアリアでも
良かったかも。
アリアにゴスロリ着せたら
可愛いと思うんですよ！
巫女服の白雪と理子と
三人で並べたい。

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